

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

November 2023

Issue 96



**NEWCASTLE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

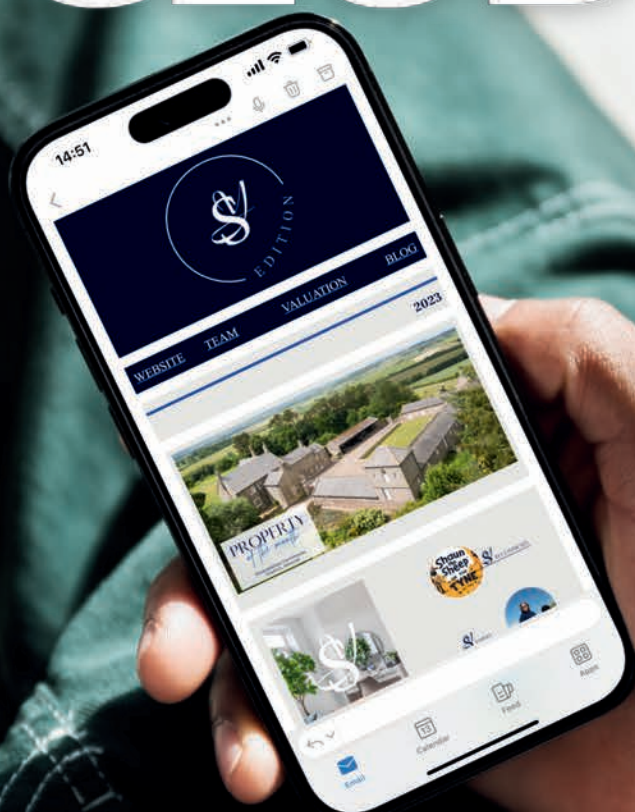
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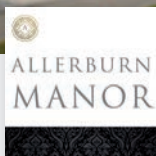
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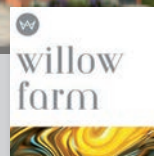
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# Foreword

**Welcome to the November edition of Northern Insight, the region's most comprehensive and indepth business, social and leisure magazine.**

Our cover stars are Royal Grammar School who recently celebrated the accolade of national Independent School of the Year.

Amongst a plethora of social event photography we feature Mincoffs Solicitors 75th anniversary party and Sweeney Millers celebration evening at Chaophraya.

Elsewhere we showcase the annual Asian Business Connexions Awards and Dinner, the largest celebration and recognition of the Asian community in the North East.

On our travels we take trips to Café Mercy which is shaking up Newcastle's cocktail scene and sample an eclectic new vegetarian menu at the Chart House.

**220 pages packed full of vibrant content.**

**We hope you enjoy it !**

*Huge thanks to all of our loyal readers, advertisers, suppliers and contributors.*

*Till next month...*

*M. J. Grahamslaw*

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher  
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## Future strategies for Cancer Care come to Newcastle Expo

**Cancern North, a dynamic networking umbrella group for cancer charities in the North East and North Cumbria, hosted a ground-breaking Expo in Newcastle.**

The event aimed to foster collaboration among more than 140 charities dedicated to supporting individuals affected by cancer. It offers a unique platform to shape the future of cancer care and treatment by enhancing partnerships between charitable organisations, the voluntary sector, and the NHS.

Cancern's primary objective is to

connect charities, enabling them to understand each other's offerings, build trust, and explore potential collaborations in the future. These collaborations could focus on specific areas of support for the community. The Expo also serves to highlight the value that charities bring to healthcare services, particularly after individuals have undergone cancer treatment, emphasising the crucial role played by the voluntary sector. The network started in early 2020 with just six charities and it has rapidly grown to more than 140 throughout the whole of the North East and North Cumbria.

Maggie Bailey, CEO of Coping With Cancer based at Anitsford is the Chair of Cancern said, "The incidence of cancer is rising exponentially and coupled with that we are discovering cancer at an early age. By 2030 one in two people will have experienced some form of cancer and we need to be prepared for that.

"This event was a unique opportunity for the NHS and other partners to meet more than 140 local and national charities all working to help people affected by cancer. The amount of expertise in the room will be unprecedented."

## Tier One Capital continues to champion professional development

**Newcastle upon Tyne-based wealth management and fund management experts Tier One Capital has reaffirmed its commitment to professional development with prestigious accreditation for two of its financial advisers.**

Bianca Chibanda and Neil Marshall have both successfully achieved their Level 4 Diploma in Regulated Financial Planning through the Chartered Insurance Institute and are now fully qualified Financial Advisers for the Newcastle-based wealth management firm.

Tier One Capital provides its expertise in financial advice, pension planning, savings and investments and insurance and protection to a predominately North East client base, which includes senior executives, entrepreneurs, business owners,



professional partners and high net-worth individuals.

Bianca joined the business in 2022 as Wealth Management Support and will play an important role working alongside the Tier One Capital's financial advisers in supporting its growing client base.

Neil has nearly two decades of experience in the financial sector, having begun his career at Lloyds Bank as a senior personal adviser and subsequently progressing to bank manager in 2008.

He then moved to Tier One Capital where he started as Compliance and Risk Manager followed by Chief Compliance Officer and recently became Wealth Manager.



## Business pilot steers special needs business owners in right direction

**Karen Goldfinch, a business consultant and mentor based in North Tyneside, has found a new niche in her portfolio assisting business owners with additional needs, such as autism and dyspraxia.**

With her unique expertise and understanding of neurodiversity, Karen has become a trusted ally for entrepreneurs facing challenges associated with their special needs. One such success story is Christina Martin, an accomplished professional from County Durham, who has greatly benefited from Karen's guidance and support.

Christina Martin, the founder of Mosaic Coaching, specialises in helping students with additional needs cope with exams and various aspects of life. As someone who is neurodiverse herself, Christina creates a welcoming and understanding environment for her clients, enabling them to thrive academically and professionally.

Karen brings a wealth of experience to her role as a business mentor. With a career spanning over three decades, including 22 years of running her own business, she possesses extensive knowledge in retail, sales, and marketing. Her diverse background has equipped her with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by entrepreneurs and an innate ability to think creatively and problem-solve.

Reflecting on her qualifications, Karen said, "My experience in work and life has been instrumental in assisting business owners on their journey. By drawing upon my creative nature and problem-solving skills, I provide my clients with alternative perspectives and guide them toward success."

Karen's partnership with Christina Martin through the This is Me Agency, showcases the powerful impact of their collaboration. By harnessing Christina's vast knowledge and experience through Mosaic Coaching, Karen has helped her develop strategies to support neurodiverse individuals at universities, in the workplace, and through training programs. This successful joint effort has yielded remarkable outcomes, including a 100% retention rate for neurodiverse students at Northumbria University and the transformation of an apprehensive student into a confident postgraduate candidate.

"Everyone has a talent that can be harnessed irrespective of whether or not they are deemed to have "additional needs." What I do is listen, listen again and then lead a discussion that will take my client in the direction they need to be."

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## Allen Hire marks 40th anniversary with investment and expansion plans



**Allen Hire, specialists in hiring engineering equipment, plant and tools to leading industrial businesses across the North East, is celebrating forty years of trading.**

The Stockton-based company is celebrating this significant milestone with a series of events, including an open day for key customers, a visit by Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen, and significant investment in new hire equipment and staff.

Founded in 1983, Allen Hire has grown to supply over 200 businesses in the North East and beyond, with an extensive range of equipment, machines and tools. With ambitions to become a market leader in the region, the family-run business has invested tens of thousands of pounds in new hire items, including access equipment, construction hand tools, excavators, and welders. To keep up with the ever-changing marketplace, Allen Hire has also sought out some of the most up-

to-date 'green' equipment to help customers achieve their sustainability requirements.

The company has also invested in new additions to its fleet of delivery vehicles and has recruited four new members of staff, with plans to further expand the team in the coming months.

Allen Hire held a celebratory event on Wednesday 27th September to give customers the opportunity to network and meet senior members of the team at their main depot at Bowesfield Industrial Estate. Guests also met some of the company's key suppliers, including Shindaiwa, Snorkel and Kubota, who were showcasing their latest, state-of-the-art equipment.

The company boasts a long list of loyal customers, mostly based in the North East, representatives from many of which attended the drop-in event. They included WOODSmith Construction Group and Texo.



## Sophie Milliken collects MBE at Windsor Castle

**Sophie Milliken MBE has been presented with her award by Anne, Princess Royal, at an investiture in London.**

The award-winning North East entrepreneur is founder and CEO of Moja Group and has been recognised for her services to business and education.

Sophie is heavily involved in the wider business community and as Chair of Smart Works Newcastle, which supports women into employment through interview clothing and coaching. In addition to this, she runs several business networking events and supports start-ups and scale-ups as an investor and Non-Executive Director.

Sophie Milliken MBE said, "I am so proud to have been awarded an MBE. It was an incredible day and I was delighted to have shared it with my family and daughter. I was also thrilled to fly the flag for our region and everyone that has supported me in the North East."

"It was a privilege to meet the Princess Royal and we spoke about Newcastle, my hometown and my previous work with universities. I took the opportunity to talk about Smart Works and was so pleased to be able to discuss its vital work with her Royal Highness."

Sophie was the co-founder and Managing Director of SRS, which became the leading provider of assessment centre simulations for universities, preparing over 30,000 students for graduate jobs.

The entrepreneur later went on to set up Moja in 2022. This PR agency works with entrepreneurs and senior executives to amplify their personal profiles and become known authorities in their industries.

## Cheese and Pickle Co open at Evolve Business Centre

**Cheese and Pickle Co, a family run business that has been catering for events and celebrations across the region for more than 25 years, has taken over Evolve's onsite bistro where people can get a range of hot and cold breakfast and lunch items including two hot lunchtime specials.**

Owned by local businessman Trevor Davis, the new café is a welcome addition to the centre which is home to a number of growing software and technology businesses.

The kitchen is also used for the catering side of the business and is where food for events of all sizes across the city and beyond is prepared.

Speaking about the move, Trevor said: "It's a really nice spot for us, the centre is modern and clean and suits the needs of our catering business. The response has been great so far and we're building a strong customer base."



"We serve a mix of hot and cold meals which includes a choose your own salad bar/ deli counter and many hot options each day such as chilli, curry, rice, chips, mince and dumplings, quiche, pies, pasties, toasties, paninis and more."

"The benefit of Evolve is that we not only have a great customer base right on our doorstep, but the kitchen is big enough for us to also manage catering for a range of events. People use us for everything from corporate events and meetings to weddings, christenings, funerals and celebrations."

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## Cover Story

# Finding the superpower within every child

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster of Newcastle Royal Grammar School

The Royal Grammar School is arguably best known for our students' consistently outstanding academic results, some of the best in the region.

**We were equally thrilled to recently achieve the accolade of overall national Independent School of the Year, chosen amongst hundreds of other well-known Independent Schools across the country. Visitors are often keen to understand our pedagogy and curriculum, as well as our approach to intellectual enquiry, which surely sits behind these high achievements.**

Yet, whilst we are unapologetically a highly academic school, I constantly reiterate that stellar results of the RGS are the consequence, not the purpose of our outstanding education. As such, you will find in RGS that we talk as much – if not more – about character, as we do curriculum. Our character education, like invisible but indelible fingerprints, covers everything that we do and is firmly rooted in our values.

In our Junior School, we refer to our values as Superpowers, introduced by our effervescent Junior School Head, James Miller, are lived and breathed in daily Junior School life. We even have an RGS Superpower 'Code', a set of characteristics which the Junior School students and parents pledge to align behind, with these qualities constantly celebrated. As such our Junior School students grow, believing that they are **ABLE** to be responsible and curious about the world, **STRONG** enough to show their individuality and to embrace failure in pursuit of progress, having the **CALM** needed to pause before reacting and to compare themselves only to themselves, and above all, a **KIND**, caring compassion towards themselves and others.





The students' loyalty and motivation to live their school-life by this code is a sight to behold, and fundamental to our happy and cohesive Junior School community.

In the Senior School, while the vernacular is more mature, the sentiment is consistent and woven, like golden threads, into everything we do.

**SENSE OF BELONGING** combines kinship in the school community with our heritage on Newcastle soil, where we took root almost five hundred years ago. We are place and people. In our school we respect those around us, are open-minded and non-judgmental. Bonds formed at RGS last a lifetime but we are of the global age; borders and boundaries are transcended as our community connects like other families spread across the world.

**LOVE FOR LEARNING** seems self-evident in a school built on our formidable academic reputation. We communicate unashamedly how passionate we are: about what we have been told, what we have found out and what we want to discover. We encourage everyone to enjoy school: the journey, not just the destination. Teaching happens in the most surprising and diverse ways and the best learning often happens by stealth, when it is least expected, in the nooks and crannies of the curriculum. Thirst for knowledge and freedom to explore can help that love of learning grow. We support self-expression, critical thinking and creativity in both teaching and learning - for academic success but also to make better people. Challenge and difficulty, frustration and confusion: these are the hallmarks of learning.

We love the process and love the challenge while knowing that support is always on hand for everyone.



**BELIEF IN EACH OTHER** is RGS's value of trust. When self-belief seems in short supply, the belief of others changes the focus, makes us see differently. We understand how believing in others can bolster confidence, make someone glow and foster their faith in themselves once again. There are few limits to achievement with tenacity, sheer graft and people you trust at your back. We allow ourselves to be guided by those we believe in. We catch when others fall but, most importantly, we help them get back up again. Well-being is at the heart of this value. We work hard and believe that others will do the same – we are in this together, whatever it may be.

**AMBITION TO SUCCEED** is to push forwards, move and innovate. This is the thread that ties our other values together. We tell our students we must never stand still, unless it is to reflect on what we have done and how we might do it differently next time. We have the intellectual freedom to explore and take risks – so we can push boundaries in and out of the classroom. We can be brave with teaching methods and co-curricular opportunities, encouraging that first small spark of ambition to flare. Ambitions can be quiet, yet ferocious; successes can be small but life-changing. With our strong support network, we recognize and celebrate these many guises.

One of the proudest moments I have experienced in my time at RGS so far, was our inaugural RGS Festival this summer, where we awarded prizes to students for each of the above Superpowers and Values, the recipients all nominated by their peers. In doing so, the students reflected on the transformative positive characteristics they saw in others, and the prizes were awarded not on grades or lofty academic achievement but on the qualities which make our community the industrious, welcoming, ambitious and inclusive school that we experience daily. The culture which enables every child to find and polish their own values and superpowers, whatever they may be.

[www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk)





# NUFC St James' STACK fanzone!

Peter Swift, Director at Dunwoodie Swift Architects, tells us more...

**It is 50 years in October since I attended my first Newcastle United fixture with my Dad in the 'new' East Stand, at home to Chelsea. A couple of years ago I searched out the programme & it now sits in a frame on my kitchen wall alongside the programme from the Champions League game at home to Barcelona in 1997 which was the day my daughter, Sophie, was born.**

It was quite an eventful & memorable day that one! I remember telling the midwife to get a move on as kick off was looming, even though it was still twelve hours away. Fortunately Sophie did as she was told & entered the world just shy of midday, a good seven hours before kick-off which gave me time to go home, get changed & call into the hospital to see her again & walk across Leazes Park to the match.

Here we are 26 years later, with much muddy NUFC water having flowed under numerous bridges, I still have my two season tickets & have, along with many others, endured many years of mediocrity with the occasional blip of relative success. We haven't won a sausage in my lifetime but since the takeover a couple of years ago there is now genuine hope that this could be about to change in the not-too-distant future. All the pieces seem to be falling into place for a serious challenge for trophies on all fronts, with all areas of the club getting a makeover & investment. The debates around ticketing, ground expansion, new training ground etc. rumble on.

One area that I am particularly looking forward to seeing come to fruition is the proposed NUFC Fanzone which is being developed in conjunction with STACK, owned by Neill Winch & the Danieli Group. I've been involved with Neill & STACK since day one, when we toured the country doing research into shipping container developments, so it's particularly exciting for me to have designed the new scheme which is to be located on the existing St James' Metro station site.



support of all stakeholders, including the football club & the City Council, we have managed to gain full planning approval.

Whilst the NUFC St James' STACK Fanzone will include all the favourite elements of a 'traditional' STACK development ie the central plaza & stage, street food vendors, bars, first floor decked area, it also includes a VIP area with it's own private bar & toilets & will have more of a sporting emphasis, but will also include all the family orientated events that are generally associated with STACK during the day & school holidays. The first floor & approximately half of the plaza area will be protected from the elements with tents which are black on the inside & white on the outside. Not sure where that idea came from! There will also be a coffee shop with an outdoor seating area at the main entrance to the scheme.

One thing is for sure is that when there is a game on at St James' Park or an away game which is televised, the atmosphere at St James' STACK will be absolutely rocking & will, without a shadow of doubt be *THE* place to be. When there isn't a match on there will be live bands & entertainment on throughout the day & evening as has become associated with STACK since it's inception. From my personal perspective, after 50 years following NUFC, it gives me great satisfaction to be playing a part in helping the club develop what I have no doubt will become a firm fan favourite once it opens it's doors in 2024!

To find out more go to [www.dunwoodieswift.co.uk](http://www.dunwoodieswift.co.uk)



STACK is well on it's way to becoming a national brand, having started out with the temporary scheme on Pilgrim Street, followed by Seaburn, and now spreading as far as Carlisle, Manchester, Lincoln, Sheffield & Northampton whilst also adding Whitley Bay, Durham & Bishop Auckland locally to the portfolio. We have designed the scheme very quickly from a standing start &, with the

**dunwoodieswift**  
**architects**





“

*...STACK is  
well on it's  
way to  
becoming  
a national  
brand...*

Peter Swift





## B-Social

**In July 2023 we were certified as a B-Corp – not just with one business, but two!**

**Having been involved in the movement since 2021 and watching with fascination, the growth, engagement, and speaking to more and more businesses about becoming a B-Corp, we were delighted to host the first B-Social in the Tees region this week.**

The foundations were strong, laid down by the OG's Robson Laidler and Sail Creative who have to date hosted four events of a similar nature throughout the North East. This one felt even more special as not only was it the first in Tees, but our first as a certified B-Corp. And

what a buzz! We sold out, hosting more than 60 like-minded businesses and individuals all keen to embark on the B-Corp journey.

We had a sensational line up with three B-Corp businesses – Dan Adamson representing Robson Laidler, Rebecca Kitching represented Tapered Plus (the second in Tees, and new kids on the block) and finally Rob Gilbert from Baringa, kindly introduced by 'Dr Sustainable' himself, Alex Hope, Deputy PVC at Northumbria University.

Our theme was 'Impact' which is relevant to all and every business regardless of size or sector. Impact can be defined as a change in an aspect of people's wellbeing, or the condition of the natural environment caused by an organisation. But I am sure, like me, you have your own definition. A key question asked and answered by our panel and pondered by our audience is this – what impact are you making and what impacts are you working towards?

From voluntary days, charitable donations, improvement in policies, reducing landfill, increasing local supply chain and engaging/educating stakeholders, the answers and examples were plenty.

One resounding message from us all – take the Business Impact Assessment (BIA, you can find it at [bcorporation.net](https://bcorporation.net)). It's a free tool and a great place to start your journey and understand five key aspects of your business – People, Governance, Communities, Customers and the Environment.

***We would love to chat to you. Contact me or any of my team to find out more.***

***Jessica@JustWilliamsLtd.co.uk***

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# Why it pays to update your sales practices



Emma McDonald with Jessica Williams

We believe first and foremost that business should be used as a force for good. We also believe that profit isn't and doesn't have to be a dirty word in this sphere. For it isn't that generating profit is negative but the way you do so and the way you then reinvest or spend it that matters. You can - and I believe should be - profitable; but purpose-driven.

## Think People, Planet, Profit AND Purpose.

So, is this relevant in the sales and marketing world? Absolutely!

Being an ethical, responsible, and sustainable business is crucial to us and that portrays itself in every aspect including our sales practices, processes, and principles.

Ask yourself these questions as a starter...

1. How ethical are our sales methods?
2. How responsible are our engagements with all stakeholders?

3. How sustainable are our techniques to create long-term gains over short-term wins?

Operating with these three key questions in mind will help to build trust and credibility within your organisation, both in its brand perception and of its culture. If your prospects and customers believe you are operating in this way and encouraging them to do the same, their loyalty and potential spend is likely to increase. Customer loyalty is key - we are so often operating in highly saturated markets that focus can be on the next sale - but what about customer longevity and customer lifetime value?

If I could increase your existing customer longevity and spend by 10% per annum - what difference would it make to your bottom line? (My details are at the bottom if you want to find out more...!)

Organisations that prioritise responsible and sustainable practices and are transparent about their journey are far more likely to gain a positive reputation, referrals and build networks based on these principles; attracting customers of the same ilk. Take the B-Social we held last month - 60 like-minded people coming together to share our journeys. It isn't all rosy so let's stop pretending it is and be honest and frank about what hasn't worked, what we've learned from and support one

another in growing. It helps when having those tough conversations be it on price, margin, risk etc. Building relationships with your prospects, customers and all stakeholders alike with these core principles at the heart is the best, and in my mind, the only way.

Sales practices must change. They are outdated and at times quite frankly atrocious. Take a look at your LinkedIn inbox if you don't believe me. Let's spend some time training our salespeople to review their practices and processes - think about our methods and take a step out of our businesses to review them from a bird's eye perspective. Sales and marketing teams require continued professional development and investment. If you haven't got a team, a person or a focus on these areas and are keen to ensure your business is perceived in line with the above - I know just the company.

Just Williams is a certified B-Corp - we believe in using business as a force for good. We offer outsourced sales and marketing support, consultancy and mentorship.

**We would love to chat to you. Contact me or any of my team to find out more.**

**Jessica@JustWilliamsLtd.co.uk**  
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“

*...I really  
believe in  
the power  
of  
marketing...*



# Excellence is our baseline

The communications firm with only one thing on their mind. Honesty.

It's very easy to assume that every company has an accounts department, HR department, sales, IT, etc etc. The list goes on and on.

But for most of you reading this, that won't apply.

**For many of you the business will be...you...and possibly just you. The majority will be classic SMEs who need to cut their cloth accordingly and only have people where they're absolutely necessary.**

So, what about marketing, PR and design which can be grouped under the communications heading?

You might have a great product or a wonderful service, but are you letting people know about it?

It's a tricky one. However, there is an answer.

You bring in an external communications agency who will, in effect, act as your PR, marketing and design departments.

Which is precisely how Resolution in Stockton operate.

"We become part of our clients' firm, we build relationships and discover what they are trying to achieve," says founder Sharon Starkey. "Our clients are companies who are achieving great things but don't have the luxury of an extensive team of people looking after their communications, even though they realise how important it is.

"A classic example occurred last year when the MD of a company contacted us to help with his expansion plans. As a business, his company was hugely successful with almost 90 per cent of the UK market, but he was struggling to enter new markets and particularly wanted to gain traction in Europe. He also couldn't devote sufficient time to investigate what he needed to do. Consequently, he brought us in and we've worked closely with his team to develop a strategy that aligns with the business plan. Our in-house team of creatives manages the communications and they concentrate on running the business."

And that was really how Resolution started almost ten years ago. Sharon had a background of working in PR and marketing roles, representing well-known brands, and was forging a successful career path.

But then she suffered a serious illness.

She decided that the time had come to move from being in a comfortable position to being a risk taker. She'd gained vast experience in communications and wanted to apply what she had learnt to smaller businesses where strategy could have a real impact.

"I'd previously worked with lots of large organisations and really enjoyed the strategy of working closely with them to find solutions to marketing, PR and design problems. I really believe in the power of marketing and when it's considered and aligned to business targets, great things happen.

"Resolution was built on the foundations of honesty and remains so today. We've got really good at knowing what we are great at and never promise something to a client when we know we can't deliver it. Don't mistake this for us not achieving, we do amazing work which I am continually proud of, but we don't make promises we can't substantiate. If part of a campaign calls for something outside of our skillset, we say so. And then we refer or collaborate every time, never asking a supplier to white label anything. Credit where credit is due.

"As an agency, our values are strong. We choose not to work with two clients who operate in the same sector, believing we can't fully represent them if we are also creating campaigns for their competitors. If we can't deliver excellence...we won't do it. Excellence is our baseline."

Sharon is steadily expanding her team at Resolution which includes copywriters, content creators and graphic designers. Would she move from Teesside? The answer is a definite no. She's passionate about her home town (her seven colleagues also live in the Tees Valley) and she can't think of a better place to do business.

"Teesside is filled with fantastic people who have a real tenacity. I feel incredibly lucky to be operating in this region and Resolution wouldn't be what it is without the amazing Teessiders within the team. Every person understands their role and knows what they are working towards, and we recognise their commitment. I am surrounded by people who are masters of their craft and am amazed, but not surprised, at what we achieve collectively."

If you would like to find out more about how you can take your business forward, the best idea is to have a chat with Sharon.

Any firm which has excellence as its baseline has got to be worth talking to.

**You can contact Sharon at the Resolution offices in Stockton by calling 01642 061000 or emailing [info@resolutioncomms.co.uk](mailto:info@resolutioncomms.co.uk)**

**You can also find out more details via their website [www.resolutioncomms.co.uk](http://www.resolutioncomms.co.uk)**





## Technology Experts Synergi & Unifi tee off with customers

Recently named in Ward Hadaway's Fastest 50, Synergi, a leading cloud solutions & managed IT services provider, welcomed businesses from across the region for their second golf day of the season.

Held at Close House, guests enjoyed an informal and relaxed day of golf and hospitality that Synergi has become known for.

Finalists will compete for the Synergi cup in November.











## CMYK | Business Technology assist client Opencast to donate 12 more laptops to help school coders

Less than six months after donating a dozen MacBooks to a North East school to help pupils design and build robots, Opencast has donated another 12 laptops to a second local school. David Sarginson, our head of software development and a STEM ambassador, explains why.

Earlier this year Opencast partnered with their IT services provider CMYK to rehome a dozen MacBooks. The laptops were donated to Wardley Primary School for use in their active robotics programme. Pupils spend their own time perfecting robot designs, regularly contributing to the school's robotics YouTube channel.

Wardley's robotics team took part in this year's International World VEX robotics competition in Dallas, Texas – joining more than 900 teams from around the world – and the school is hoping to go back to Dallas again in 2024.

Now Portobello Primary School in Chester-Le-Street has benefitted from our rehoming scheme. The school is also heavily involved in the VEX robotics programme – and delivers STEM and coding workshops.

Later this month Portobello will be hosting a regional heat for the International World VEX robotics competition – and an International Day of the Girl VEXROBOTICS event.

The latter event will focus on coding and computational thinking. Pupils will use VEX Robotics equipment to develop their coding of robots through a range of problem solving activities.





The main aim of the event is to promote women and girls in STEM focused careers, and inspire girls into tech.

Opencast has been delighted to help both Wardley and Portobello schools further their ambitions in the STEM curriculum and with the VEX Robotics competition. We hope the computers will help students learn and build an interest in technology. We're committed to doing what we can to boost STEM learning in schools through schools visits and donations like this. We need to invest in the next generation of technologists to meet the ever-changing demands and trials of the future.

We're particularly pleased that the MacBooks will be used to help inspire girls and young women into tech careers.

In 2021 STEM Women reported that people identifying as women made up only 19 per cent of the students studying UK computer science degrees. Similar stats were reported by The Guardian, that girls made up only 21.4 per cent of computer science GCSE students.

The Guardian also reported the number of women employed in tech in 2021 was 17 per cent of the workforce. It is clear that there's still work to do.

We will continue to do all that we can to encourage more women into the sector, including into Opencast. We see it as our responsibility to get more young women and gender diverse people passionate about technology and encourage our people to become STEM ambassadors to help achieve this goal.

Working with our IT services provider CMYK to donate MacBooks to local schools is another small step – but it clearly has a big impact on schools and pupils alike.

Callum Bone, STEM and digital enrichment leader at Portobello Primary School, said: "After setting up our PPS STEM and Robotics brand earlier this year we were keen to develop our partners in industry. After reaching out to Craig from CMYK it was brilliant to see his passion for STEM learning and hear about the growth of their company and the tech sector in the north east.

"We are delighted to have received 12 MacBooks from Opencast. The difference they will make to our STEM offer is truly unimaginable. We are now developing our outreach by hosting three STEM events this year where we will utilise the MacBooks to make our STEM offer as inclusive as possible.

"We are keen to develop further business partnerships to enable our children to explore further careers in the STEM field."



Connor Chipchase, STEM and mathematics leader at Portobello Primary School, added: "Our VEX Robotics team is truly a shining light at our school. This year we have created an all-female team to allow our children to experience a range of careers in the STEM and robotics industry.

"We can't thank CMYK and Opencast enough for the support they have shown us, and we look forward to working closely with both businesses in the years to come. Our children have already started using our donated MacBooks to develop their coding skills ahead of our autumn and summer competitions. We can already see the difference the technology has made to our speed and collaboration when developing a more complex code."

One of the young Year 6 recipients said: "Our new MacBooks are fantastic! They have helped us to develop our coding skills further and work together on new coding techniques."

Craig Pratt, regional sales director at CMYK, added: "We are extremely privileged to be playing a part in this initiative and assisting Opencast with its donation of MacBooks to Portobello Primary School.

"After meeting Connor, Callum and the pupils at Portobello, you can clearly see their enthusiasm towards STEM programmes and how they embrace the opportunities these projects can unlock for the pupils. The impact these tech donations is having on schools and their pupils is remarkable.

"Seeing first-hand the schools' aspirations in embracing STEM and robotics projects makes these donations all the more rewarding, and the possibilities this is creating for our next generation of tech champions is wonderful."

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# \$ ANNOUNCE NEW EXPANSION



We are delighted to announce the appointment of Mandy Denning as our new Regional Valuer and Support Consultant to the company. Mandy has an extensive background within the sales business and has spent the last 10 years working with properties predominately in the Tyne Valley and within mid and North Northumberland.

Mandy, who enjoys an idyllic home life living just south of Northumberland National Park and north of Scots Gap, understands the beauty of proper rural homes and good quality living outside of the urban centres.

With a strong desire and love for horses, dogs and most things rural, she is a regular attendee of country shows and is very well known within the rural market towns of Hexham, Alnwick and Morpeth.

Mandy brings with her some excellent knowledge of the rural housing market and has worked very well with high value properties within Northumberland in particular.

She will look to support our regional team based in Newcastle, where Duncan Young and Ashleigh Sundin are based, as well as Gillian Greaves in Alnwick, to ensure clients considering a rural house sale receive the very best levels of attention and care.

Mandy will oversee the initial valuation and instruction and deal with sales and negotiations through to the actual completion of your home, ensuring that you have a one stop shop with somebody who has care, personal attention and professional support to all of your property needs.

Please contact Mandy on her mobile 07523696041 or by email [mandy.denning@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:mandy.denning@sandersonyoung.co.uk).





SANDERSON  
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## *Hazel Mill*

*Eachwick, Near Ponteland*

Hazel Mill is situated in the delightful hamlet of Eachwick, a sought after location only a short distance from the village of Ponteland. This fabulous, detached stone built family home has been beautifully designed to bring the outside in and make the most of the amazing views over rolling countryside, offering country living on the edge of town. Externally, there are beautiful landscaped gardens with terraces, a decked area with hot tub and a paddock. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: H.

 4  4  3

**Price Guide:**  
£2 Million



**Mandy Denning**  
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[mandy.denning@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:mandy.denning@sandersonyoung.co.uk)





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## *The Fat Badger, The Seabreeze & The Stargazer* *Near Bamburgh*

The Fat Badger, The Seabreeze and The Stargazer provide three unique holiday homes close to the beautiful coastal village of Bamburgh, only 2.7 miles from Ross Sands beach. Stunning design features include glass fronted exteriors and luxurious contemporary interiors with exposed beams/brickwork and floor to ceiling windows. These stylish properties boast uninterrupted views and oodles of charm, and have been successful holiday lets over the past few years, each generating an annual income of circa £40,000 to £50,000. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: Business Rates.



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**Price Guide:**  
From £650,000



**Mandy Denning**  
01665 600 170  
mandy.denning@sandersonyoung.co.uk





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## *Wildwood*

*Burgham Park, Burgham, Felton*

In a most idyllic location in the heart of the beautiful Northumberland countryside is Wildwood, a stunning family home in circa half an acre of fabulous gardens, part of the small executive development of Burgham Park. This extremely attractive double fronted property has been constructed to a very high specification by the current owners and offers versatile, flexible living space flooded with natural light. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: G.



5 5 3 D

**Price Guide:**  
£1.15 Million



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## First promotion for CF specialist Sam Shield a year after joining RGCF

**RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) has announced the promotion of rising star Sam Shield to Corporate Finance Manager.**

His promotion follows the recent appointment of Euan Mullholland as Corporate Finance Executive, which takes the Newcastle-based CF boutique to 21 people, making RGCF one of the largest full-service CF advisory firms in the region.

Having joined RGCF just over a year ago, Sam has contributed to a wide number of transactions, providing expert advice and support to clients from the region, across the UK and internationally.

A graduate of the University of York, where he achieved a BSc in Chemistry and a MSc in Management, Sam began his career with Deloitte where he was an Audit & Assurance Assistant Manager.

Since joining RGCF he has been involved in a range of transactions including the sale of Calibrate to RSK and MAPD Group's acquisition of Cumbrian legal practice Thomson Hayton Winkley and its sister business The Rural Law Practice.

Carl Swansbury, Partner and Head of Corporate Finance at RGCF, said: "Sam rapidly integrated himself into the firm and has been a valuable addition to the team. He fully deserves this promotion, which reflects our strategy to attract, nurture and support the best talent to enable them to progress their careers alongside providing the best service and advice to our growing client base."



## North East Fund Investment gives NE&C Windows & Doors a clear view on growth goals

**A North East home improvement firm is laying the foundations for future expansion with the help of a six-figure investment from the North East Growth Capital Fund Supported by the European Regional Development Fund.**

NE&C Windows & Doors designs, manufactures and installs a range of high-quality windows, doors, conservatories and balustrades for commercial and domestic clients across the North East, Cumbria and Scotland.

Operating from a 16,500 sq ft unit on the Glover Industrial Estate in Washington, NE&C Windows & Doors already works with many of the North East's best-known housebuilders, as well as several of its largest local authorities.

The business was recently the subject of a management buy-out, with its senior team acquiring it 20 years after founders Ed and Heather Ramshaw set it up.

After working with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in the £150,000 investment, the new management team is now aiming to increase the range of products it supplies and target new markets across the UK.

It is increasing the marketing activity behind its growing range of fire protection-related products for commercial premises such as assisted living facilities, care homes and offices, while it is also looking to take advantage of opportunities to grow its customer base for its range of high-quality composite doors.

Four new jobs have already been created as a result of the investment, with more expected to follow as the growth plan is rolled out and the business works towards an initial ten per cent year-on-year increase in its turnover.

## M2 Education Ltd acquired by PE-backed international education staffing company, Humly

**M2 Education Ltd, one of the North of England's leading education staffing businesses, has been acquired by an international private equity backed organisation to support its continued growth and utilisation of new technology.**

M2 Education Ltd, which was founded by Mark Birnie and Melissa Kumar, has been purchased by Sweden-based strategic acquirer Humly. This transaction marks Humly's fifth UK acquisition

as it strengthens its position in the education recruitment sector.

M2, which has offices in Newcastle and Preston, places teachers, teaching assistants, and tutors on a permanent and temporary basis into primary, secondary and Special Education Needs (SEND) establishments. In terms of geography, the business focuses on three regions, Newcastle, Cumbria and Lancashire.

Humly is a tech-focused education staffing

company, which helps schools access skilled and qualified teachers and teaching assistants utilising an efficient, automated platform.

As a result of the acquisition, Humly will overlay its technology into M2 Education's operations to serve existing and new clients to enhance overall user experience and increase efficiencies for both education establishments and candidates.

The business will be run, day to day, by its existing experienced management team, working in close collaboration with Humly. The founders will remain with the business for a defined handover period prior to their exit.



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# Careful consideration required before taking early retirement

Many people dream of being able to retire early. However, there are concerns that this could lead to financial difficulties with some not having the funds they need for a longer than expected retirement.

**To mitigate the risk of this, it's important to develop a strategy to help provide you with peace of mind and a financially secure retirement. While it may be tempting to dip into a pension pot early to assist, there are downsides of doing this.**

To provide guidance on efficient retirement planning, Financial Planner, Omar Din at Azets Wealth Management has explored the key considerations below.

## Overview of retirement planning

The basis of planning ahead for the end of your career is to ensure you can do so with confidence that your finances are secure, and you are able to have the retirement you had hoped for.

Essentially, a strategy to replace or supplement your earned income or utilising assets in a way that maximises their value provides a strong foundation. Making the best use of pensions and other savings is a critical step.

Early retirement certainly bears thinking about, although it may be enticing. Before acting, it is always a good idea to take financial advice and think carefully about the following factors:

- Do you know how much you'll need to live comfortably in retirement?
- If so, do you have enough in your pension pot for the lifestyle you want?
- Do you have savings or any other source of income?
- Do you still have a mortgage or any other outstanding debt you are still liable for?
- Could working for just a few more years offer you valuable financial security?



Omar Din

## Risks of accessing pension early

Research shows that accessing your pension before reaching State Pension age can reduce your pot by 59% on average. Another concern which people are being warned against is reducing their pension contributions in response to the challenging economic landscape.

In a similar vein, it is advised that over 55s don't start raiding their pension pots as another means of combating any financial pressure they may be facing. There are fears that this will result in them having less income in the future, if people withdraw lump sums or start taking income sooner than planned.

## Difficulty re-entering workforce

According to research from the Centre for Ageing Better, out of work over-50s are two times more likely to be out of work for a year or more than their younger counterparts, therefore compounding the issue for those who have retired early and realised their pension pot may not have the amount required for their extended retirement.

## Pension changes to consider

One of the announcements in March 2023's Budget that was met positively in some quarters was the abolition of the pensions lifetime allowance (LTA) charge. However, in somewhat of a surprise turn, a policy paper was published by the Government on 18 July which has added an important caveat for those who inherit a pension from someone who dies before the age of 75.

Scheduled to take effect on or after 6 April 2024, the inheritance of an appropriate pension pot

would now be subject to income tax. In many cases this will be at the recipient's marginal rate. This would have a far reaching impact and mean an increased tax charge for a number of individuals across the UK. 75 or under is a relatively young age at which to die these days, so in many cases this will be an additional tax burden for relatives, at a time when they are grieving the untimely loss of a loved one.

More information in relation to this impending change to inherited pensions is explored here.

## The role of an experienced advisor

At Azets Wealth Management, we can help create a retirement plan that works for you, through understanding your financial goals and assisting you in planning for the future.

We can develop strategies for taking an income from or keeping control of your pension pot, or a combination of both. Pensions are just one part of planning for retirement, we will provide advice to take advantage of all planning opportunities for structuring wealth.

## We are here to help

**For further information on retirement planning or to discuss your specific situation, please get in touch with a member of our specialist Wealth Management Team – [hello@azetswealthmanagement.co.uk](mailto:hello@azetswealthmanagement.co.uk)**

*Azets Wealth Management is a trading name of Azets Wealth Management Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Azets Wealth Management Limited is a subsidiary of Azets Holdings Limited.*





# When should I contact an Insolvency Practitioner?

By Chris Ferguson, Director and Head of Recovery & Insolvency at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd

According to the latest official Insolvency Service, England and Wales are currently experiencing the highest rates of corporate insolvency in 14 years.

**What this translates to is an increasing number of North East businesses struggling to keep up with cost increases and revenue headwinds, becoming closer to no longer being financially viable.**

Appointing an insolvency practitioner doesn't always mean liquidation. Their job is to help business owners find a way to prevent the company reaching this critical point. If there is a chance of returning to solvency, they will look at ways to address their financial situation and find a way to restore financial stability, to avoid a formal insolvency process wherever possible.

Much of the work carried out by an insolvency practitioner goes 'under the radar' to ensure potential issues are identified and averted before they happen. The sooner this work can start, the more likely it is that an appropriate turnaround solution can be found for the business.

## What are the signs of distress?

There are a number of recognised signs of business distress that may indicate problems are brewing within a company. Here are five common signs for business owners to watch out for:-

**1. Cashflow** - Cash headroom is often an early indicator. If you are constantly hitting your overdraft or facility limit, it should prompt you

to look at the underlying reasons for this. Is it a working capital issue, which means tighter credit control or stock management may be the solution. Or is there an underlying profitability issue within the business that needs to be addressed.

**2. Falling margins** - Declining revenues and increasing costs are also very immediate issues for many at the moment, and are having a substantial impact in almost every business sector. What is driving stagnating or falling sales, where have direct costs and overheads materially increased across your business? To what extent can cost increases be absorbed and passed onto clients and customers? Identifying the answer to these questions is key to addressing both financial and operational turnaround strategies.

**3. Defaulting on payments** - If you're struggling to settle supplier invoices or pay your tax bills on time, it is a real red flag. Where suppliers are stretched too far this could lead to credit lines being stopped or withdrawn, while missed payment deadlines can lead to a spiral of interest and penalty charges. While HMRC could allow you to defer payments, and lenders and suppliers may give you a little breathing space, this does not offer you a long-term solution. Increasing your borrowing to cover these costs can make your situation worse.

**4. Seeking inappropriate debt solutions** - Where there is a need for liquidity, directors often look for additional funding. However, further borrowing for distressed businesses without an appropriate turnaround plan can often make your situation worse. Inappropriate funding can be expensive and often requires personal guarantees, which can mean owners find themselves in far worse territory personally if things go wrong.

**5. Customer failure** - The insolvency of a customer can cause real issues for its supply chain and is often prevalent in sectors such as construction or contracting businesses. Insolvency practitioners regularly see businesses hit hard by a client failure beyond the company's control. Maintaining regular customer contact, frequently checking credit ratings, and monitoring any changes in terms of trade is always recommended. Also, keep an eye out for more subtle signs, such as redundancies or departure of key personnel.

## When should you contact an Insolvency Practitioner?

Insolvency and restructuring professionals are there to help struggling companies achieve the best possible outcome in a worrying situation.

If your business is showing signs of financial distress, the overarching message is to ask for qualified advice as early as possible. This often significantly broadens the restructuring options available to achieve a successful turnaround without the need for a formal insolvency process.

Having this conversation may be difficult, but it provides time to make important decisions about your business.

**For further information or advice on all aspects of business recovery and insolvency, please contact Chris Ferguson at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors via [chris.ferguson@r-m-t.co.uk](mailto:chris.ferguson@r-m-t.co.uk) or on 0191 256 9500.**





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# Cultivating excellence: thoughts about building a world-class team



Dan Cooper, Partner and Head of Outsourced | FD.

In the modern business landscape, the importance of a cohesive, skilled, and motivated team cannot be overstated. A world-class team not only propels a business to achieve its short-term goals but sets the stage for long-term success and industry leadership.

## Understanding the Essence of a World-Class Team

A world-class team epitomises a perfect combination of talent, dedication, and collaboration. It's not merely about hiring the very best, but nurturing a culture that fosters innovation, continuous learning, and mutual respect among its members.

### a) Talent Acquisition

Scouting and acquiring talent is the cornerstone of building a robust team. It's pivotal to look beyond mere qualifications, and consider a candidate's experience, skills, and cultural fit within the organization.

### b) Diversity and Inclusion

A diverse team brings a plethora of perspectives to the table, driving innovation and problem-solving. Remember, embracing diversity and inclusion is not a mere checkbox exercise, it's imperative in today's global marketplace.

## Fostering a Culture of Excellence

A conducive environment is essential for a team to thrive and exhibit superior performance. A culture of excellence engenders a positive,

motivating atmosphere where every member is inspired to contribute and give their best.

### a) Continuous Learning and Development

Investing in the continuous growth and development of your team is non-negotiable. It not only enhances their skill set but demonstrates commitment to your employees.

### b) Recognition and Reward

Recognising and rewarding exemplary performance fosters a sense of belonging and motivates team members to continually strive for excellence.

## Communication and Collaboration

Effective communication and seamless collaboration are the bolts that join together a high-functioning team. Encouraging open dialogue and collective problem-solving cultivates a sense of community and helps the team to achieve common goals.

### a) Transparency

Transparent communication about team goals, challenges, and expectations fosters trust and ensures a unified vision.

### b) Technological Tools

Leveraging modern technological tools can significantly enhance collaboration, ensuring that the team operates cohesively, regardless of operating in different geographical locations.

## Measuring and Evaluating Performance

Regular assessment of team performance against predefined metrics, including their personal goals, is critical to ensure that the team is on the right track towards achieving its objectives, as well as their personal objectives.

### a) Performance Metrics

Establishing clear, measurable metrics provides a tangible benchmark for evaluating team (and individual) performance.

### b) Feedback Loops

Constructive feedback, both from peers and management, is invaluable for continuous improvement and maintaining a high standard of excellence.

Building a world-class team is a challenging process that demands a well-thought-out strategy, substantial investment in talent and culture, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. The payoff, however, will be monumental – a world-class team is the engine that drives a business to new heights, ensuring its standing as a formidable player in the current and challenging competitive market.

# Meet the RG Outsourced | FD team

## Rachel Johnstone – Outsourced Advisory Senior Manager

### What attracted you to working at Rycroft Glenton?

I first joined Rycroft Glenton back in 2011 on a placement year out from studying Maths at Northumbria University. I was attracted to working at a leading independent firm, that I felt would expose me to many different aspects of accountancy and business advisory work.



### What do you most enjoy about your role?

I like how varied my role can be – no day or week is ever the same!

### What are your long terms goals within the business?

My long term goal is to help to build our team, ensuring we can grow our client base whilst continuing to deliver the best possible service.

### What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?

My proudest achievement in the last 12 months is being promoted to Senior Manager in April 2023!

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## Josh Georgiou – Outsourced Advisory Manager

### What attracted you to working at Rycroft Glenton?

Initially, the role sounded like a good match for my experience and after meeting the team in person I knew RG would be a great fit.



### What do you most enjoy about your role?

Working with clients across a range of industries allows me to continue developing my skills. There are always new challenges to keep the role interesting and engaging.

### What are your long terms goals within the business?

Building strong working relationships with existing clients and developing the reputation of the Outsourced | FD team allowing us to continue to grow.

### What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?

I am proud of onboarding new clients and being given the opportunity to prepare bespoke management reports and forecasts to add value to new engagements.





**Rachael Best –  
Outsourced Advisory Executive**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

I wanted to be part of a firm with strong core values. RG has such a hard-working but friendly culture, with excellent training and career opportunities.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

Every day is different, I am always on my toes! I love working closely with my clients and building a trusted relationship with them.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

I would like to continue to grow and develop my role within Outsourced | FD, supporting and collaborating with the other service lines at RG.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

Seeing Outsourced | FD pass the five year mark was a great moment. Having been part of the division since day one, it is fantastic to look back and see how far we have come and how the team has grown.

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**Lauren Thompson –  
Outsourced Advisory Executive**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

Their use of technology to aid client delivery really appealed to me as a much more efficient way of working, not something that I had previously been exposed to.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

Having the personal connections with our clients to really foster the sense of working with and not just for them is a huge positive for me, as it really gives you a sense of accomplishment to be able to tackle issues and produce solutions as a team.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

To remain a part of the Outsourced | FD team as it continues to grow and strengthen as a service line.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

Being part of the team helping one of our clients in a business restructure earlier this year, facing and crossing all the hurdles that this inevitably created, to now having smoothly running processes has been extremely satisfying. This included my taking the lead on the implementation of a new software for the firm which I was proud to be trusted with.

.....

**Tilly Logan –  
Outsourced Advisory Executive**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

The values of RG aligned with my own values. I appreciate the importance they place on being collaborative and sharing knowledge and experience to be able to deliver trusted unambiguous advice. In addition, the warm and friendly welcome I received from the team made it clear that RG really values their staff and their wellbeing.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

I love that the role is client-facing, ensuring that I can communicate with lots of different people on a regular basis. I also enjoy having the opportunity to support my clients' businesses within a number of different areas e.g., forecasting, credit control.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

I hope to progress within the Outsourced | FD team to a manager role. I would like to develop my leadership skills whilst building my knowledge and experience working alongside my colleagues at RG.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

My proudest achievement in the past 12 months was definitely completing my ACA qualification to become a chartered accountant.



**Ashleigh Gray –  
Outsourced Advisory Executive**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

Before working at RG I was studying AAT independently, so I was attracted to working here as they offered training contracts and specialised training rooms to support my studies and overall development.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

The best part of my role is the clients, as I have developed strong client relationships with long standing clients over the years! I also enjoy being the dedicated "go-to" staff member for all aspects of VAT.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

My long-term goals are to continue to develop and build knowledge, in particular regarding VAT, whilst supporting the Outsourced | FD team wherever possible.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

My proudest achievement in the last 12 months has to be welcoming our little girl into our lives.

.....

**Jordan Thompson –  
Outsourced Advisory Assistant**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

I was attracted by Ryecroft Glenton's strong presence in the market and their focus on supporting young professionals.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

It has to be working within a collaborative team and the month end processes, which provide my clients with business insights to illustrate performance.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

I have recently started my ACA Chartered exams, so my current focus is on completing these.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

In the last 12 months I qualified as an Accounting Technician (AAT) – it really was a great moment getting those final exam results.

.....

**George Butler –  
Outsourced Advisory Executive**

**What attracted you to working at Ryecroft Glenton?**

The long-standing reputation of the firm and close and long-standing client relationships held across the business.

**What do you most enjoy about your role?**

I enjoy the variety of clients that we work with and the strong collaborative support of the team.

**What are your long terms goals within the business?**

My long-term goal will be to complete the ACA qualification and become a chartered accountant.

**What is your proudest achievement in the past 12 months?**

My proudest achievements include successfully graduating from Northumbria University whilst also sitting on the Skiing & Surfing Society committees and of course joining RG in August.



***Building a Word Class Team has always been my aim. Remember that linking it to your vision is not just a task; it needs to be at the core of your business and the essence of your success.***

***ryecroftglenton.com***



# Collective leadership is the only way forward

We are all aware of the massive upheavals that the business world has experienced in the last few years in the UK and whilst Andrew Marsh says it is counter-productive to labour on those, what he does say is that we are only at the beginning of change and to continue to move forward successfully and not be left behind, adaptation is key.

**One thing the North East region has an abundance of is talented leaders, and one thing as a community North Easterners are great at is collaboration. Andrew believes if we strengthen up by putting the two together into collaborative leadership, then this modern approach will be empowering for all; especially in tackling multiple challenges, such as recruitment, retention, staff performance and more.**

He says: "On moving forward from such impactful crises as the world has endured recently, there are potentially three main areas that are so deeply affected, that if not addressed in a more collaborative way will see the start of a whole new 'business world crisis'. As Jennifer Howard-Grenville and Laura Empson stated in their recent article "3 ways to Prepare for the Future of Work" the who, the what and the why of work need to be our collaborative focus – or in other words the needs of workers, how we work, and what work represents to each of us.

"Things we took for granted about all the people within any business can no longer be presumed and the future of the working world needs to shift up a gear in response.

"As well as negative impacts of political, societal, environmental and economic calamities, pressures from digital advancement, particularly AI, are creating a huge shift. Hybrid working, wellbeing demands, demands and priorities of the new 'employee-led' world are all hurting the norm as we knew it.

"One word and one word only contains a suite of solutions to these three tests – collaboration.

"Any leader not focusing on collaboration as a leadership strategy, is going struggle. Many who have brought businesses through this century are overwhelmed at any current and all future challenges, feeling they may have nothing left to give. That is the perfect environment where support, joint approaches and empowering others means that people feeling similar can rely on others, to help the entire team to thrive.

"In a nutshell, collaborative leadership is grounded in the belief that a shared model of leadership is more creative and effective than any leader working alone. The modern management style encourages collaboration and teamwork amongst the company's employees and has been proven to create an environment in which employees feel empowered and connected, improving morale and enhanced co-operation.

"In my Vistage groups we practice and encourage this form of collaboration. Through our peer group approach and the encouragement of collaboration within our own environments, all of us make better decisions, more quickly, especially by learning new skills from subject matter experts; by sharing best practice; and harnessing the power of the group's combined experience and knowledge we demonstrate the clout of collaboration.

"Take that into a team throughout different levels in any organisation and you unleash the best in people. By motivating with positivity, a leader can inspire trust, encourage transparency, improve performance, solve problems and mitigate risks.

"When working on the who, what and why of a working environment leaders need to create a safe, open space for

communication, with a built-in effective process for collaboration and be present to facilitate conversations. To quote the previously referred to article:

"To address the challenges of the future of work, leaders need to understand that theirs is not an individual responsibility, but rather a collective one that brings together a complex coalition of colleagues across the organisation...

"Key to the success of this is for leaders to work out to best equalise team members desire for autonomy under this collaboration, with the organisation's need for control, within guidelines like legislation, governance and company articles. Younger workers may need both guidance and reassurance to work within the collective identity, under their own position, while being asked to step beyond it to collaborate.

"Whilst building a collective future, it is also key for leaders to reaffirm their organisations brand, and the things that have worked previously, what has already been achieved and what is good about the current culture to ensure those things are not lost in the drive forward to organic collaboration.

"Alison Reynolds of Reynolds-HR backs this thinking too. She said: "A high proportion of businesses in the North East are SME's and the leaders are brilliant at their core competencies but can often lack the bandwidth to strategically focus on the future. Collaborating with other SME Leaders and management within their own teams allows them to share specific expertise and knowledge. Being part of a peer group forces time away to think about the business and collaborating with others means that you have a wider "team" with complementary skills."

"Ultimately, we all crave to be part of something successful, something we can be proud of and that we enjoy committing time and energy to. But as times are changing, organisations need to, and so do we all as individuals. To carry on as before, is to bring old challenges into new scenarios, when what we need to do is transcend, transform and create a new norm, where diversity and inclusivity is valued, and hierarchy is less important than the combined drive to meet everyone's needs throughout an entire organisation. Only by doing it together, can the future bright."

Andrew's mission is growing & supporting the NE & UK PLC leaders, so they make a positive impact on society.

Now an award-winning chair of excellence for Vistage, Andrew has spent the last 25 years specialising in the launch, growth, turnaround and transformation of business ventures.

An accomplished Executive having led & transformed numerous businesses across multiple sectors Andrew has operated in both public and private sectors. He has personally launched several successful businesses, lead numerous M&A integrations. He also coaches business leaders and entrepreneurs in the UK, Europe and North America and is also a NED across the Legal, Digital, Marketing, Retail Marketing, Leisure and Charity sectors.

**You can contact Andrew on  
[andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk](mailto:andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk)**





Andrew Marsh





## Senior hire will lead new inclusive recruitment service at eQS Group

National diversity, equity and inclusion specialist, eQuality Solutions Group (eQS), has appointed its first-ever head of recruitment services to help businesses diversify their teams and people from underrepresented groups, find their ideal career.

Head of recruitment services, Jo Atkinson, will manage eQS' new inclusive recruitment provision, which will complement its current range of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) solutions delivered by its seven companies across the UK.

The service will disrupt traditional recruitment approaches by leveraging the Group's decades of experience in supporting neurodivergent higher education students and diversity in the workplace.

It will connect top-tier employers with a diverse pool of talent, ensuring inclusive hiring, onboarding and development so that candidates can enjoy meaningful and sustainable careers.



## Ferguson promoted at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors has strengthened its senior leadership team with the promotion of Chris Ferguson to director.

Chris heads up the Gosforth-based firm's specialist recovery and insolvency division, which works with businesses and individuals experiencing financial difficulties to find appropriate solutions to address their issues.

Prior to joining RMT in 2019, he spent almost two decades working in senior roles for some of the UK's biggest professional services firms, predominantly on corporate restructuring engagements.

As well as managing RMT's formal insolvency appointments, he has extensive corporate advisory experience, including cash flow management, strategic option reviews, debt funding strategies for distressed businesses and exit management for lenders and stakeholders.



## Familiar face joins the banking team at Burnetts

The latest addition to a fast-growing legal banking team may be new to the firm, but he is a familiar face to his colleagues.

Jonathan Yates has just taken up the role as Legal Director within the Banking and Property team at Newcastle's Burnetts Solicitors LLP, after years of working in other top law firms in the region.

Jonathan has more than 20 years of experience in the legal sector and has a broad range of commercial property experience, with a particular focus on acting for funders and borrowers on property transactions.

He will now play an integral role as part of the Burnetts Banking and Property Finance team, which supports both lenders and borrowers in everything from real estate investment to agricultural, healthcare and development finance transactions.



## Corporate finance partner David Wilson joins Armstrong Watson

Armstrong Watson in Newcastle has made a key appointment in its growing Corporate Finance team with the hire of new Partner David Wilson.

David, who will be the firm's North East Corporate Finance Partner, joins Armstrong Watson after eight years with Clive Owen LLP, where he was head of Corporate Finance.

Having worked in local practice for more than 15 years, completing in excess of 100 transactions including MBOs, MBIs, trade acquisitions, disposals PE investments and numerous restructures, David has vast experience of the North East region and the finance market.

His appointment follows the hires of Corporate Finance Executives Ellis Kerton and Jordan Dixon in the last 12 months and comes at a time when Corporate Finance Activity remains buoyant despite increasing interest rates and a threat of recession.

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Peter Neal

# How to choose the best peer group for you

There is a plethora of peer group led groups emerging across the UK and the North East with them all promising a host of solutions, so how can you know which is right for you as an individual?

**Here Peter Neal, founder of Experience Bank Group, talks through hints and tips to find your way forward and know where to commit your time and energy for the best return.**

“Having founded a number of peer group development programmes, I have always ensured that the recruitment process firstly ensures that the group is right for the person and, just as importantly, that the new person is right for the group.

“Bringing new people into an environment of trust needs to be done sensitively to not

undermine the bond, confidence and dynamic of the existing members. Equally, a new person needs to know they are welcome and slip quickly into becoming a peer.

“How seriously that is taken by the facilitator and group is a great barometer as to what kind of group it is and whether it is for you. The Experience Bank peer group for existing and aspiring NEDs, Trustees, Board Advisors and Consultants to Boards only accepts one new member a month per cohort for exactly these reasons. Prior to joining, prospective members are introduced to a buddy who is already a member and can give an honest and insightful account of the sessions prior to the new member’s first meeting.

“For me it makes sense to put that effort in, as the established members of the cohorts need to know that it isn’t a revolving door for anyone to try. Good peer groups need commitment, and to become a community connected by common ground. That would be disrupted by people coming and going.

“If you are a person who takes commitment seriously, then you should also check if your potential peer group has a charter, that all the members sign, promising the right behaviours including a commitment to attend meetings regularly.

“I’d also look at the other forms of support you receive for your membership. This isn’t a one size fits all, but our members value the contact with each other between meetings, both in-person, through our WhatsApp group and our pre- and post-meeting email newsletters.

“Research their social media to see the other members and check out the calibre of their businesses. Is their knowledge and support going to be the impact you need? Check reviews and also look into the facilitator and their reputation. Any peer group is only as good as the people in it, that’s a fact! Our groups have quality talent from a range of backgrounds and it is always inspiring to see how they offer solutions and process issues with each other, in true collaboration under the guidance of Andrew Marsh. Andrew is not only an industry pioneer, he is an experienced facilitator of twelve peer groups of leaders across the UK, for Vistage as well as Experience Bank Group.

“Finally look to see if the peer group organisation’s ethics fit with your own. Experience Bank Group for example incorporates The Experience Bank philanthropic, social enterprise company along with a commercial venture providing three symbiotic services - EB Board Level Recruitment, EB High Performing Boards and EB Continuous Personal Development.

“5% of all revenue from Experience Bank Group is gifted to The Experience Bank social enterprise to enable more start-ups, early-stage businesses, charities and social enterprises access to high quality, advisory and non-executive talent.”

**If you are keen to know more then visit [www.theexperiencebank.co.uk](http://www.theexperiencebank.co.uk) or call Peter on 07843 329393.**



# New technology in the workplace - the ultimate error?

Technology is advancing at an increasing rate, but does continuous implementation of new systems help or hinder your business? Head of Digital Productivity and Automation, Adam Lisik, explores.

**Technical innovation can be characterised by rapid and continuous change; what was considered cutting-edge a year ago could be obsolete today. While completing expenses on sheets of paper, or faxing invoices to clients are things of the past, adopting every new technology quickly could leave some of your team behind.**

Involving staff in decision-making and testing, communicating clear benefits, and hosting regular refresher sessions are all key, but so is a long-term technology strategy that aligns with your mission – and something that a team can get on board with.

During the pandemic, quick adoption of online collaboration technologies without consideration for how this would be best communicated meant delivery of often ‘in-person’ tasks didn’t translate online, becoming frustrating and often ineffective. For example, Teams had to launch breakout rooms in December 2020 to facilitate small group discussions as part of a larger event such as exhibitions, but not all organisers used the same communication channels meaning a decline in event attendance, confusion with systems and missed opportunities.

While younger staff members are ‘digital natives’, and others have grown through the technical revolution; everyone across

an organisation has a different experience and need, so moving integral processes into new systems and technologies at break-neck speed doesn’t mean they will be immediately understood and adopted – and that leads to corner cutting, or complete avoidance.

But with risk comes opportunity; technology can improve workplace experience, accessibility and data security.

The most important part of any technological implementation is communication. Having your team onboard from the start is imperative to understanding that changes and disruption are worthwhile in the long run – without that, it’s likely you will never see the benefit.

Ultimately, workplaces, teams and

organisations are changing – with digital processes and technology playing a huge part in that. While some areas are adapting more quickly than others and creating a more efficient way of working, others are lagging behind.


So does implementing new technology help or hinder your business? Digital innovations have huge potential to improve staff experience and positively impact business operation, reputation and even profits – but only if properly implemented.

***Want to find out more about how you can seamlessly integrate new technologies in your business? Get in touch with Adam at [adam.lisik@waterstons.com](mailto:adam.lisik@waterstons.com)***



Adam Lisik





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# Maven invests in Newcastle University's latest spinout company

Pioneering life science start-up MarraBio raises funding to commercialise its unique protein technology.

**Maven Capital Partners has combined forces with two regional funders and a biotech industry specialist to support Newcastle University's latest spin out company with an initial round of seed investment funding.**

MarraBio is developing ground-breaking technology to produce alternatives to bioactive proteins, some of the most expensive man-made materials used in industry.

Using technology originally developed at Newcastle University which has been licenced exclusively to the company, MarraBio is able to manufacture proteins which mimic the function of conventional proteins at much lower cost and with improved performance.

Products developed by MarraBio will target the multi-billion-dollar markets for biomedical research and therapy, as well as the production of cultivated meat, which is predicted to be worth over \$20 billion by 2030.

The North East's life science sector is thriving and the region is home to a number of leading business communities with an ecosystem that drives innovation at every stage of their journey, from concept to commercialisation. As a result of increased investment, a pool of fantastic talent and an abundance of ambition across the region, local businesses in the industry have the support and resources to compete globally.

Maven is one of the UK's most active private equity investors, providing essential capital to help businesses scale. Our range of funding solutions have helped hundreds of management teams across the UK make their vision a reality and achieve transformational levels of growth. With offices across the UK, including Newcastle and County Durham, Maven manages a number of funds to support business growth including the North East Development Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

Aidan Courtney, MarraBio's Executive Chairman, said: "This is an outstanding investment syndicate. Our technology has the potential to accelerate the development of new medicines and to make the production of animal-free meat commercially viable. But this will only be achieved with significant financial, commercial and technical support. So, I am very pleased to have such strength in depth in our investors at this early stage, and that much of our funding is coming from North East investors. This augments the support we have received from Newcastle University to create the company."

Dr Daniel Peters, MarraBio's CEO, said: "Our technology builds on two decades of research at Newcastle University led by my co-founder Professor Jeremy Lakey into the use of a very unusual protein called Caf1. We have always been aware of the commercial potential of the research, so it is great that we now have the resources we need to bring products to



the market. Over the next few years, we will supply products based on the Caf1 protein which address the severe limitations of current products, notably cost and shelf-life. With our investors' support, we will be able to develop products for a wide range of markets and achieve rapid sales growth."

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, said: "We're delighted to back local university spin out, MarraBio, a pioneering business with a technology platform that is already producing a reagent with proven biological effectiveness for use in cell culture. Dr Daniel Peters is an expert in the field and we look forward to working with the team to help drive the business forward as they look to invest in developing and launch their products."

***Maven is passionate about working with ambitious businesses to achieve their strategic goals and maximise growth potential. If your business, or the business you advise, is looking at private equity as a solution to fund future growth we would love to hear from you. Speak to one of our investment team by getting in touch at [funding@mavencp.com](mailto:funding@mavencp.com)***





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## More than just another accountancy

Valued. They're an extension to your business.

### Submitting annual accounts is something every business has to do.

The only snag with this is that your annual accounts are just that...annual.

Granted, some firms will have an in-house accountant, but most of you reading this will probably allow 51 weeks pass and then frantically pull everything together to come up with some final figures which are to be submitted.

But wouldn't it be better to know how things were going in terms of profit and loss on a regular basis throughout the year? It would allow you make short and long term decisions with one eye very firmly fixed on an up-to-date set of figures rather than working on something that is likely to be more than 12 months old. You probably wouldn't dream of running your marketing and sales forecasts using information that is hopelessly outdated so why should you expect to use financial figures that are potentially giving a wrong impression.

Thankfully there is an answer...and yes...it means you really will have regular updates on the state of play when it comes to your company finances because you will, in effect, have your own in-house accountants.

This is precisely how Valued operates and explains why they rack-up industry awards like being named 2023 Accountancy Firm of the Year at the North East Accountancy Awards or being named in the top three national rankings for SME accountancy firms by Xero. Bearing in mind that the Xero awards are entered by thousands of firms, it is incredible that Valued have been named in the top three.

"It's all about delving deeper into accounts and trying to find out what a person or company is trying to achieve," said Valued founder and MD Stephen Paul. "We find out what their 'why' is...why are they involved in business? We also find out their 'what'...what are they hoping to achieve, what are their aims? Here at Valued we believe that the days are gone when the only contact a person or business has with their accountant is once a year. We want people to be able to make decisions on a recent set of figures, not something that could be approaching two years old. How on Earth is a business supposed to produce forecasts and make decisions based on figures which are hopelessly out of date? At Valued we care about our clients and want to help them over the entire year rather than just for a few days. We want to be part of their journey."

And if you want a gauge of how successful and well-regarded Valued is, it's worth noting that they not only represent businesses and individuals, they also work with other accountancy practices who come to them for advice.

"We work heavily with Xero accountancy software which is Cloud based," adds Stephen. "I started using it when my mother was seriously ill and I wanted to spend more time with her. I realised that this was one aspect of how future accountancy could work. We've been so successful in utilising this tool that we are now



Stephen Paul

asked by other accountancy firms for guidance. We were Xero's fastest growing partner, so much so that we have established the Valued Academy which is aimed at helping entrepreneurs cut through red tape, to stop wasting time and focus very clearly on how to take their business forward. In effect, we act as one-to-one mentors to help ambitious business owners realise their potential.

"The big difference with Valued is that as well as offering a full accountancy service, ensuring that customers are fully compliant, they also provide valuable business advice.

In other words, they're not an accountancy that merely sorts out your tax affairs. They operate as though they were part of your business...same goals...same desire for success...and helping you along the business road.

**For more details of what Stephen and his team can offer at Valued, the best idea is to get in touch with them for a friendly chat. Call into their new offices on the outskirts of Durham or call 01207 502145 or email [wecare@yourvalued.co.uk](mailto:wecare@yourvalued.co.uk)**



# New offices signals recruitment drive for Torgersens chartered accountants



L-R: Alison Henshaw, Beverley Howells, Patrick Melia, Martin Johnson.

**Torgersens Chartered Accountants has officially announced its new Sunderland office with a visit from the CEO of Sunderland City Council, Patrick Melia.**

**Patrick, who is leading the dynamic transformation of the city, briefed partners and staff on future regeneration plans and contributed to a video the firm is producing to promote its new location, including its aim to immediately hire senior staff.**

Torgersens, which was established in the 1970s, has offices in Sunderland, Jarrow and Gosforth and employs over 30 staff. The Sunderland office was previously located at Norfolk Street and is

now based at a modern, spacious, open-plan ground floor office, at Avalon House, on the banks of the River Wear.

Patrick Melia, said: “Congratulations to Torgersens on its new office and the commitment of the partners to not only invest in Sunderland but to recruit more senior staff. News of multinationals creating huge numbers of new jobs or the announcement of large infrastructure programmes, naturally capture the headlines, but alongside this is the army of firms that are a vital part of the business environment and who, between them, deliver thousands of high-quality new jobs every year in our region. Torgersens very much falls into that category as it not only employs a growing number of high-quality people but provides accountancy and management advice to a vast range of companies in Wearside and across the North East.

Martin Johnson, partner at Torgersens, said: “It was a pleasure to welcome Patrick to our

new offices and to hear the exciting plans for the further regeneration of the city. There has been phenomenal transformation in the last three years and at Torgersens, we sense, through conversations with our clients, there is increased confidence and pride in being in business in Sunderland.

“This is an exciting time for our firm with the move to fantastic, new premises and with three high quality jobs immediately on offer at this office. We are building a strong, cohesive team across our three offices with staff that support and encourage each other. This is a great time to join us and we are looking forward to greeting new team members in the very near future.”

***The jobs on offer at the Sunderland office are; an Audit and Accounts Senior, an Assistant Audit and Accounts Manager and a Personal Tax Senior. For further information on the roles available go to [www.torgersens.com/careers/jobs](http://www.torgersens.com/careers/jobs)***



“

*...Regrets,  
yes, we  
have had  
a few...*

Peter Rutherford



# A different and independent way to do financial advice

By Graham Courtney

I recently met with Peter Rutherford, a director of Rutherford Hughes Limited...

**Based in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne, Rutherford Hughes are a small business with a broad experience of all the useful aspects required for the best financial advice. They deliver a bespoke service that avoids fitting products around clients. Their sole concern is to give clients the best possible service and the best possible results.**

"To do that, we need to be 100 per cent independent."

"It's so important that we are completely flexible," said Peter Rutherford, one of the founding directors. "My colleague, David Hughes, and I, have worked in the world of finance for many years. It is that sort of experience which allows us to listen carefully to what a client is looking for and then provide the best possible advice. You have two ears and one mouth and should use them in proportion.

One of our unique features is that we continually monitor the funds that populate our strategies and ensures that they are always fit for purpose. We don't just put funds in place and then leave them there. The portfolio is always being reviewed and adjusted as needed to ensure the very best levels of performance. We're looking for investment funds which perform above average to their peer group on a regular, consistent basis. If they don't...they're gone...and we look elsewhere. We have no bias to any fund group or manager."

Bearing in mind that the company's continued success has been against a backdrop of Covid 19, rapidly rising interest rates, inflation, a volatile global market and wars in Ukraine and Israel. They all affect how financial assets perform... both short and long term. Gilts, which are normally consistent performers, have struggled over the last two to three years, but they are recovering.

"Clients with what could be described as a more cautious portfolio have been most affected by the recent financial instability, added Peter. "We took action to protect those portfolios, but it has been a very difficult time. Our investment service means we daily interact with the investment platform to ensure everything is as we agreed... payments in, payments out, cash balances and the funds that make up portfolios."

"We invest for growth, aiming for real returns over and above inflation in the medium to longer term. We can also deliver income and or ESG strategies, as required.

Confidence in what we offer to clients comes from external reviews from professional experts who have given praise to the robust nature of what we deliver.

Regrets, yes, we have had a few, then again too few to mention. Growth is not always going to be the flavour of success, but history will tell you that the periods of growth in our investment markets have been longer than periods of bear markets.

Our clients, like all, have taken a Ukraine/inflation correction but over the longer term have a meaningful return against inflation. Time is the great healer."

If you'd like more information, the best idea is to contact Peter Rutherford or his colleague David Hughes and they, or one of their team, will take you through precisely what they can do for you.

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Peter with David Hughes



# 10 reasons to consider hiring a Portfolio Finance Director



Kingsmere Finance Directors,  
L-R: Geoff MacLauchlan, Nina Evans, Steven Jones,  
Harriet King, Bob Evans, Alister Brown

The concept of hiring a part-time portfolio Finance Director is a new one to some business owners who may not be familiar with the term or don't know how one might benefit their business. Bob Evans, a portfolio FD at Kingsmere Finance Directors, is one of a team of experienced FDs working with local and national businesses as a vital financial resource.

**Bob shares his top 10 ways a portfolio FD can add value to your business.**

## 1. Enhanced Decision Making

By basing key business decisions on relevant and accurate financial information a business owner can avoid costly mistakes and reduce the risk of loss. These decisions include around financing the business, expansion, or downsizing, whether to enter a new market or produce a new product.

## 2. Better Financial Information

Producing accurate and timely financial statements, management reports, projections, forecasts, budgets, and cost models that are all based in economic reality. These tools enhance insight and promote proactive management. By identifying the levers that drive performance they can be calibrated to maximise efficiency, lower costs and optimise profit and cash flow.

## 3. Improved Internal Controls

Appropriate financial controls can provide many benefits including accurate financial statements, improved control of company assets and reduced risk of fraud.

## 4. Tailored Flexibility

With a portfolio FD, support levels can be varied

and customised to the evolving needs of the business, tailoring the FD's time accordingly. Increased support can be dialled up at critical times, reverting to a more consistent level when appropriate.

## 5. Cost-Effective Expertise

A portfolio FD can bring all the benefits in terms of experience, skills and knowledge of a full-time resource, at significantly less cost.

## 6. On-Site Support

Services can be provided on-site which is convenient for meetings and to perform critical work. The FD becomes embedded and acts as part of the management team. When not on-site, the FD can be 'virtually' available through video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Teams or Slack.

## 7. Specialist Skillset

A properly qualified FD is a business professional with relevant experience across a range of commercial environments. This important distinction between a career FD and a company's accountant is key. With their experience, the FD can swiftly identify and solve many financial and business problems, employing best practices and techniques.

## 8. Increased Productivity

Hiring an FD to deal with the financial and administrative functions, frees up the business owner or management team, enabling them to focus on other value-enhancing aspects of the business. In addition to bringing financial and accounting expertise – an FD can deal with areas such as human resources, facilities, insurance, legal and compliance, as well as stakeholder relations.

## 9. Greater Perspective to Empower Entrepreneurship

An FD can improve the decision-making process by bringing facts, and solid numbers, and asking the right questions. They bring fresh perspective and insights to the business owner, in turn making life a little less lonely for the entrepreneur. A portfolio FD can be a sounding board and trusted advisor for new ideas and initiatives.

## 10. Stakeholder Confidence

Stakeholders such as investors, lenders, and creditors react positively knowing that a business has had the foresight to have a professional FD on board. This added confidence helps when looking for outside investment, debt financing, or positioning the business for sale.

Perhaps the biggest benefit, however, is how the business owner or management team can transfer their financial and administrative burden to the FD, freeing them to work on other critical aspects of the business.

Bob is one of five outsourced, portfolio FDs that make up the Kingsmere Finance Directors team; Kingsmere clients have access to a vast breadth of expertise across a wide range of sectors.

**For businesses considering engaging with a portfolio FD, find out more at [kfdl.co.uk](http://kfdl.co.uk) or email the Kingsmere team at [info@kfdl.co.uk](mailto:info@kfdl.co.uk)**



# Tier One Capital helps Kenton A.B.C. punch above its weight at major community event



**Kenton Amateur Boxing Club (A.B.C.) continues to punch above its weight in the North East boxing scene, thanks to continued support from Tier One Capital's partnership with Sport Newcastle.**

**The Amateur boxing club recently held an exclusive programme of top class sparring featuring Commonwealth, Olympic and amateur boxers from across the region and overseas.**

Open to the public, the master class event took place at Kenton Park Sports Centre, and featured more than 60 boxers from clubs across the region and saw boxers from Dublin Docklands Boxing Club travel to Newcastle to compete in the event.

Across the two-day event, members of the public and local community were treated to over 100 sparring sessions in Olympic sized rings, featuring multiple Irish and European champions, all expertly refereed by the region's top class referees Paul Bainbridge and Gary Robson.

The amateur boxing clubs represented included Benwell Victoria, North Road, Wallsend

Boxing, Dunston, Ashington, North Star, Mainsforth Empire School of Boxing, Dublin Docklands, PS Boxing, Barnard Castle and Marden.

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive Tier One Capital, and Sport Newcastle's main sponsor, said, "It is great to see the impact of our continued partnership with Sport Newcastle and the positive effect it's having in the local community and surrounding area. To see so many keen youngsters sparring in a disciplined way and enjoying themselves was truly fantastic.

"Tier One Capital is committed to supporting sport in the community and it's obvious to me that Kenton A.B.C. is one of the best examples of this in the city."

Craig Pape, Manager, Kenton A.B.C., said, "This event was an excellent opportunity for our local community to come together and experience the very best of amateur boxing without cost.

"There was some outstanding boxing on show, and we want to thank all the boxers and families who took part and made the event such a resounding success.

"We are all so proud of what we are achieving here at Kenton A.B.C. and the support we have continued to receive from local people, grassroots sports charity Sport Newcastle and local wealth management business, Tier One Capital, helping our club to go from strength to strength."

Sport Newcastle recently awarded Kenton A.B.C.

with a grant of £1,000 to purchase new boxing gloves and head guards and also made funds available to coach six members of the club to achieve NVQ coaching qualifications.

This support has been vital to help the progression of youngster and improve their capabilities within the sport.

Kenton A.B.C. received its first grant to purchase boxing gloves and head guards so that young boxers did not have to share kit during the Covid pandemic. Since then, the relationship between the club and Sport Newcastle has flourished.

Mike Booth, vice chair, Sport Newcastle, visited the masterclass and saw for himself how the open day brought the community together and the quality of the boxing on show.

He said: "From our very first visit to Kenton A.B.C. we could see it was a well-run organisation with its roots firmly established in the local community. We had no hesitation in funding 6 of their coaches to further their qualifications and also to award one of these coaches an 'Unsung Heroes' award for the fantastic work done with the youngsters."

"The facilities are fantastic, and I was really impressed with the way that the coaches got the youngsters working and sparring straight away. It was obvious that they were enjoying themselves and trying their hardest."

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





# Tennick Accountants win National Awards...again!

Cramlington based national accountancy firm, Tennick are celebrating winning a brace of accolades at this year's prestigious Accounting Excellence Awards held recently at The Roundhouse London and hosted by comedian Tom Allen.

## Accounting Excellence.

Having first picked up the award for Small Firm of the Year for the North of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Tennick team went on to win the national 'Grand Prix' Small Firm of the Year Award for UK and Ireland. Following a rigorous judging process, the Awards recognise and celebrate members of the accounting profession that embody excellence in everything they do for their clients and teams.

Commenting on what has been an exceptional year so far, founder Graeme Tennick said: "I'm absolutely blown away to have come away with not one award, but two!! So super proud of the team that work alongside me, together with the support we have from our families that give us the motivation to be better and do better. We also wouldn't be where we are without our clients who have embraced our unique approach to finance by looking to improve time, money and freedom for each of them".

## Xero Firm of the Year.

The double award follows an equally spectacular win for the Tennick team who picked up the 2023 Xero Small Firm of the Year Award in April at another high-profile event in London. The Xero Awards showcase the achievements of those supporting small businesses to navigate current and future challenges with a focus on innovation, boosting productivity, and providing client solutions. Commenting on Tennick's win, Xero said: "Taking on a 'business first and finance second' approach, they recognise the mental struggles of business owners, putting them at the heart of what they do by upskilling their team on coaching, and focusing on mental health...with unwavering commitment to client care, innovative use of technology, and their dedication to knowledge sharing within the community...Tennick Accountants focus on the true reasons why their clients started their businesses."

## Transformational not transactional approach.

Reflecting on the team's key to success with clients, Graeme said: "Time, money and freedom; so many of us do not have enough. Having grown up in a household where my Dad built a successful forklift truck business I can relate to these struggles. I often reflect on the time I missed with the kids when setting up the firm eleven years ago - the financial sacrifices and lack of freedom that come with starting and scaling a business. Thankfully, I can now also relate to coming out the other side - I can take the kids to school and see the family benefits of a level of freedom I always dreamt of. Our 360-degree transformational rather than transactional formula of integrating the financial, operational and retirement aspects of a business, allows us to help fellow business owners to replicate the positive lessons we've learnt first-hand, but without the war wounds."

## Starting where other accountants stop.

This has been Tennick Accountants' mantra, aiming to transform lives by giving business owners time, money and freedom by helping them find the answers to questions they never thought to ask - the team aims to influence the numbers rather than just report them. Dubbed the firm's 'Chief Impact Officer', Graeme is not afraid of highlighting the firm's ambitions:

"To be recognised as a national accountancy, coaching and data analytics firm for SME businesses, eroding 'entrepreneurial poverty' in terms of money and time, by aligning business and strategic plans and at the same time strengthening the resilience of their owners. As part of this journey, when celebrating the business' tenth anniversary about a year ago, we shared this vision with our clients. We also made the bold commitment that in three years we'd win at the North East Accountancy Awards, Xero Awards and Accounting Excellence Awards. Well ahead of our target, we were shortlisted for all three, and then went on to win the national Xero and two Accounting Excellence Awards! With that track record, I'm excited to see what else we can achieve for the business, as well as our clients."

## Business first, accountants second.

Tennick Accounting's aim is to help business owners avoid regretting not spending enough time with their families and often ask their clients the following hard questions:

- Are you comfortable with how many mealtimes and bedtimes you are missing with loved ones?
- Are you happy with where your business is today and is it where you wanted it to be when you started it?
- Would you be happy with the life you have lived and left behind for loved ones?

The firm specialises in accounting and taxation for individuals and companies, with the added services of strategic financial planning that strengthens both the commercial acumen and mental health of business owners, in turn, enabling their goals and vision become a reality.

*To find out more visit [Tennick.co.uk](https://tennick.co.uk)*





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Graeme Tennick





## Sunderland law firm celebrates its 75th anniversary

**One of Sunderland's longest standing law firms has marked its 75th anniversary with a special city centre celebration.**

Richard Reed Solicitors was set up in 1948, originally to deal only with criminal cases before its founder - Richard Reed - decided to incorporate other areas of law.

Since that time the practice has gone from strength to strength and while it no longer deals in criminal law, it has become one of the most well known - and well respected - firms in the city.

And to mark the occasion, Richard Reed Solicitors invited more than 100 guests to an event at Sunderland City Hall, which also raised more than £1500 for Grace House, its chosen charity.

The celebration comes at a time when Richard Reed is enjoying a period of growth and now has more than 40 employees, which means the company has outgrown its Frederick Street offices and is now considering a move to alternative premises - but will still remain in Sunderland.

Managing Director Sarah Reid, who has been with Richard Reed Solicitors for 20 years, was delighted with the turnout and the support they received from people across the city.

"We have always been a Sunderland-centric business although we have clients right across the North East," she said.

"We are so passionate about the city and it's very important to us to be involved, to be out and about, to be seen to be given something back and to be part of the local community."

Sarah puts the longevity of Richard Reed Solicitors down to "our adaptability, collaboration and the importance of looking after our people."

"We had such a fantastic evening and it was wonderful to see so many people come along and support us," said Sarah.

"At the same time we used the event to raise funds for Grace House and we are very grateful to the many local businesses which answered our shout out for raffle prizes."

She added: "when Richard Reed originally set up the practice he was a very well known face across Sunderland."

"It remains really important to us to continue that legacy and have a real impact as well as showcasing our values and what they mean to us."



## Hay & Kilner continues building expert team with double appointment

**North East law firm Hay & Kilner is continuing to grow its expert legal team with two new appointments.**

The Newcastle-headquartered practice has added Georgia Whitfield and Geetika Mutch to its commercial property and private client teams respectively as it continues to recruit to meet growing client demand.



## Sweeney Miller Law Litigator promoted to Partner

**Leading North East commercial and private client law firm, Sweeney Miller Law, has bolstered its Senior Leadership Team with the promotion of Litigation Solicitor, Charlie Lynn, to Partner.**

Charlie leads the firm's successful Litigation department which covers both commercial and civil dispute resolution, including a specialist dedicated landlord and tenant team. Alongside client work, Charlie is also heavily involved in business development and regularly represents the firm at various landlord events in the region.

Charlie joined Sweeney Miller on a work placement whilst studying for his law degree, following which he joined the firm full time as a paralegal before completing his training contract and qualifying as a solicitor. Charlie spearheads the firm's litigation team, providing invaluable support to Sweeney Miller's other departments and their wide range of business and individual clients. This interdepartmental and multidisciplinary approach reduces the risk of clients facing disputes in the future, and if an issue does arise, then they have a responsive and robust team on their side.



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## 75 years of Mincoffs

Leading corporate and commercial law firm Mincoffs Solicitors recently celebrated its 75th anniversary.

The firm marked the occasion with a special event at The Mansion House, Jesmond, bringing together its staff and their families, alongside some retired colleagues.

Founded by renowned solicitor Harry Mincoff in 1948, the firm now employs more than 110 staff at its Jesmond office and acts for some of the region's leading businesses, including those in the healthcare, manufacturing, leisure and hospitality, technology, and media and entertainment sectors.







Leslie Gumas

## “Energy and entrepreneurship” reflected in city lawyer’s commercial property caseload

Leslie Gumas says demand for commercial property is high after hitting the ground running at Jacksons.

**A lawyer who fell in love with Newcastle as a student believes business is booming in the city she now calls home.**

Leslie Gumas, who is originally from Bath and completed her solicitor’s training contract in Poole after serving 10 years in the Army, returned to Newcastle in 2020 - and says it’s exciting to see how far the city has come in the last decade.

Leslie, who recently joined Jacksons as a commercial property solicitor, reports the demand for commercial properties, both purchased and leased, is pleasingly high.

“Newcastle is a very different place to when I was a student,” she said.

“There is so much more energy and entrepreneurship.

“There is a lot of energy out there and a lot of opportunity, with new and growing businesses needing lawyers and creating a healthy market for us.”

Leslie is also heartened by the regeneration efforts of local authorities and their collaborative work with local businesses. She says local authorities have also streamlined and digitised planning procedures and building regulations to make commercial property more accessible.

Leslie, who also has some clients based in Teesside, says the current demand for commercial property reflects a trend of returning to the office after a long period working from

home during and after the pandemic.

Speaking of her own experience at Jacksons, which is located close to Newcastle Central Station, she believes being in the office is not only beneficial to the business as it “opens us up to seeking out the local clients” but also helps people with their work life balance.

“I think people want to get out of the house and be where things are happening at work now,” she says, while adding that Jacksons does offer her and her colleagues the option to work from home too, taking a hybrid working approach.

“I’ve worked from home a fair bit and it feels good for me to be in the office every day.

“Most employees don’t want to feel constrained to one location nowadays, whether that’s work or home.

“I think people want a physical space to work from – a desk where they can leave things securely and where it doesn’t feel like an ordeal packing everything up on a night and unpacking it on a morning. It makes the transition between home and work a lot easier if you can just leave things - it’s all about physical space and the potential that physical space can bring to a business.”

She adds the office at Jacksons is “fantastic” and as a lawyer, coming into a great working environment enables her to feel she is in amongst her client base.

“It also helps separate your home life from your work life,” she adds. “It’s sometimes hard to put yourself in your client’s shoes when you’re at home day in and day out.”

Leslie adds Jacksons benefits from “beautiful facilities” including nice client meeting spaces and there are also regular networking events in the building. She says: “This is what a lot of other businesses are looking for in their commercial properties too - a perfect space that is not too formal and not too casual - an accessible office that’s nice and comfortable.”

Leslie also puts the current “buoyant” market down to new business opportunities post covid and the fact that some businesses are just beginning to bounce back following the pandemic.

“There is an entrepreneurial spirit about Newcastle at the moment,” Leslie said.

“People are just seeing all the different directions you can go in within the city and the wider region and realising it’s a place where you can take any path and follow any road you wish to.”

Leslie says the demand for services within Jacksons is in part down to the firm’s sound reputation and the fact that they are “a good team working together” for the good of their clients.

“It’s all very positive despite things such as interest rates and the rising cost of living – it’s a strong market in our region and we can see it going from strength to strength,” she says.

“Businesses do keep growing despite these external economic factors – nothing is grinding to a halt – and we are trying to keep moving forward with that perspective.

Erica Turner, partner and head of commercial property at Jacksons Law, said Leslie brought exceptional “enthusiasm, drive and ambition” to the team.

“I am looking forward to working with her for many years to come,” she said.

[www.jacksons-law.com](http://www.jacksons-law.com)



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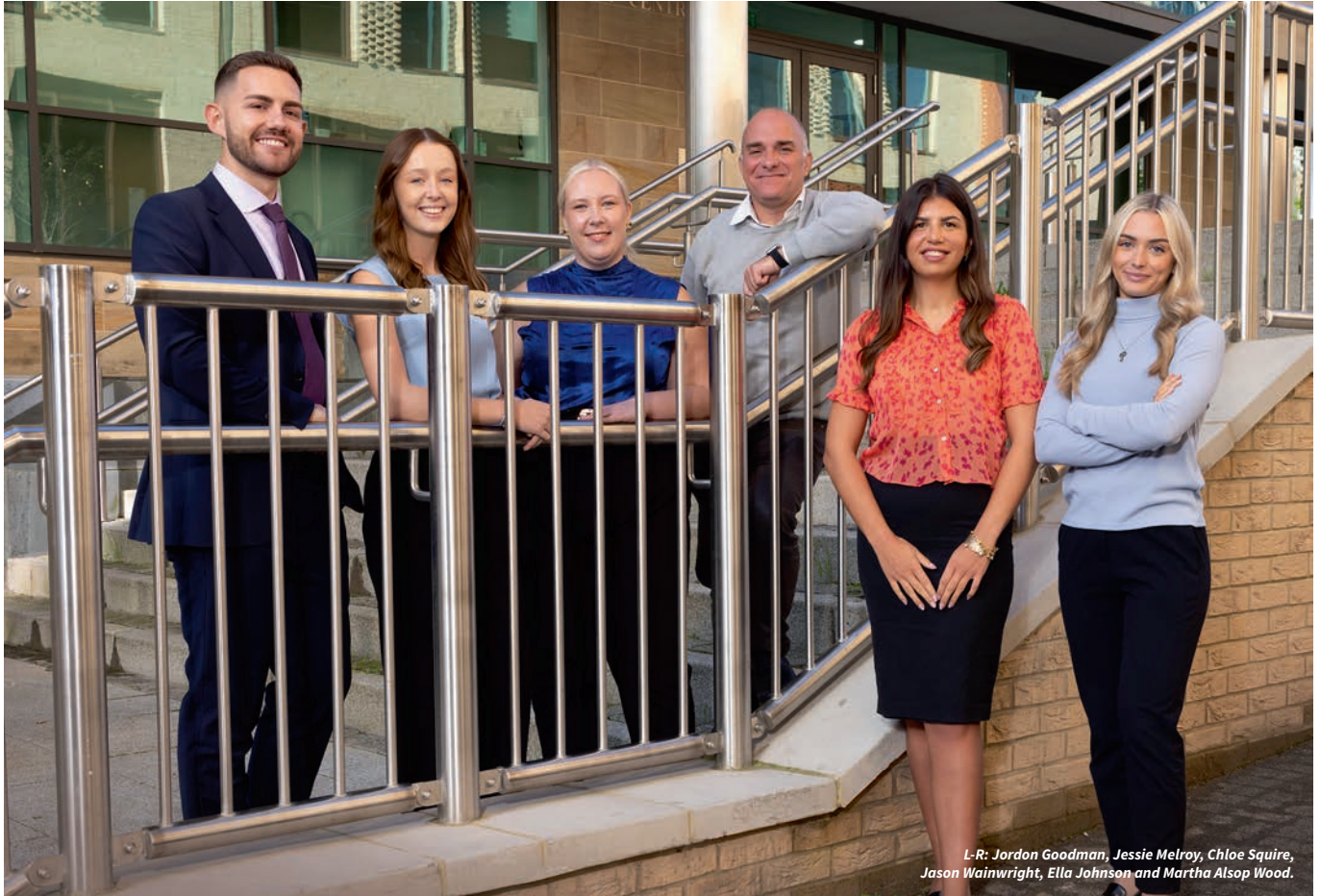
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L-R: Jordon Goodman, Jessie Melroy, Chloe Squire, Jason Wainwright, Ella Johnson and Martha Alsop Wood.

# Investing in talent: five new trainee solicitors join Muckle LLP

Leading commercial law firm Muckle LLP continues to invest in the next generation of legal talent with the appointment of five new trainee solicitors.

**Martha Alsop Wood, Ella Johnson, Jordon Goodman, Jessie Melroy and Chloe Squire will gain valuable experience across the business by spending their two-year training contracts across four different teams, including corporate finance, real estate, dispute resolution, employment, banking, construction and commercial.**

## Attracting and retaining talent

The award-winning firm has a reputation for attracting and retaining the best regional talent, with the new trainees joining the existing cohort of six trainees currently in the business. All five trainees completed their studies in the North

East and have chosen to carry out their training contracts in the region.

Every year Muckle offers work experience placements through its vacation scheme and Inspiring Careers programme. Muckle was also one of the founding members of the North East Solicitor Apprenticeship (NESA) scheme, which provides an alternative route to becoming a qualified lawyer through a six-year programme of combined academic studying and work experience. Muckle currently employs 10 solicitor apprentices under the scheme with its first solicitor apprentice, Ben Evans, qualifying as a solicitor in September 2023.

## Promising futures

Teesside-born Jessie Melroy is taking her first seat in the sports, education and charities team after completing her MLaw at Northumbria University. She returns to Muckle after taking part in the vacation scheme in 2021. She commented: "The vacation scheme really solidified my wanting to train at Muckle. The culture is just as I experienced on my placement – everyone has been so friendly and willing to help."

Martha Alsop Wood, who completed the vacation scheme with Jessie in 2021, joins the agriculture and private client team. She is particularly enjoying the social aspect of Muckle. She said: "There are so many social events that have helped settle me in already. I'm also keen to get involved in the sports teams, such as the running club and the netball team."

Accrington-born Jordon Goodman, whose first seat is in the real estate team, has chosen to stay in the North East after studying the University of Law's LPC at Newcastle University. He said: "I love living in the North East and I am delighted to start my training contract at one of the region's top law

firms. Muckle's reputation for both legal expertise and its culture made it my top choice when applying for training contracts."

Chloe Squire, whose previous experience includes working as a paralegal in the legal and tourism sectors, joins the corporate team. She commented: "One of the things that attracted me to Muckle was its strong focus on ESG and I can't wait to get involved. Being from Carlisle, I'm particularly excited to work alongside our Cumbrian team."

Ella Johnson, from Bishop Auckland, joins Chloe in the corporate team. She has previously taken part in several vacation schemes, including Muckle's in 2022, and said: "Out of all my placements, Muckle really stood out to me for its reputation and values. I'm eager to learn more and collaborate with people across all of the different teams."

## Organisational growth

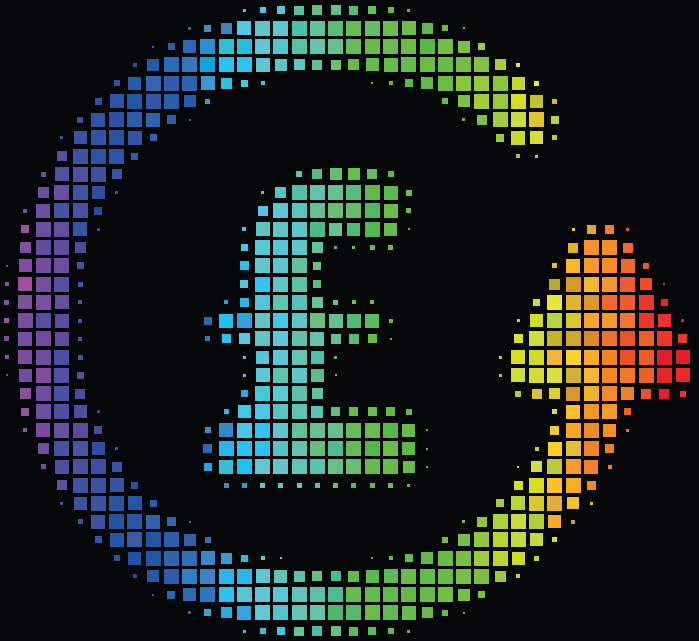
Jason Wainwright, managing partner at Muckle, said: "Our people are integral to the success of the business and we continue to invest in, develop and support the next generation of talent through a range of initiatives such as our Inspiring Careers programme and the NESA scheme. Many of the firm's partners began their careers as trainees at Muckle so we know first-hand how important it is to develop and retain talent in the region."

"We are delighted to welcome Jessie, Martha, Jordon, Chloe and Ella to the team. I am looking forward to seeing how they develop their careers at Muckle and am confident that they will go on to achieve great things".

**To find out more about what it's like to work at Muckle, visit [muckle-llp.com/careers](https://muckle-llp.com/careers)**



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Emily Cannell



# Does it matter if I divorce later in life?

Emily Cannell, partner and head of family at Mincoffs Solicitors, advises on the key factors older couples should consider if thinking about a separation.

**As life expectancy continues to increase and there is no longer a stigma surrounding divorce, it perhaps comes as no surprise that divorce rates in older couples have reportedly been on the rise.**

'Silver divorce', 'grey divorce' and 'silver separators' are all terms that have been used to describe the divorce of people who are in the later stages of their life, often after many years of marriage.

The divorce process is the same regardless of age or length of marriage. When it comes to finances, the starting point for the division of assets in a long marriage is one of equality for both parties, however this may not be possible in all circumstances. There are several factors which may be particularly important to consider in a 'silver separation'.

## Pensions

'Silver separators' are likely to be retired or approaching retirement and therefore one of their most valuable assets may be their pensions. Ensuring that both spouses have enough pension provision to provide them with an income sufficient to meet their needs will be a priority. After a long marriage, it is often considered fair for spouses to equalise their pensions.

There are a few ways to approach pensions on divorce. If there is a disparity in value, it may be appropriate for parties to enter into a 'pension sharing order' whereby rights in a pension arrangement are divided on divorce. Alternatively, pension assets may be offset against other assets, for example, one party may wish to remain living in the family home in lieu of receiving a smaller proportion of their spouse's pension. What is a fair outcome will very much depend on individual circumstances.

To assist with determining the most appropriate way forward, full disclosure of both spouse's financial circumstances (including pensions) will be required. It will also be necessary to understand what state pension the parties may qualify for and when they will be due to receive this income.

Pensions can be complicated assets and accurate advice will also likely require the assistance of a pensions expert, known as a pension actuary.

## Family home

Another important asset to consider is the family home. Generally, there are two ways that the home is dealt with on divorce; one spouse may buy the other out of their interest in order to remain living there, or the home is sold, and the equity split between them.

If the property needs to be sold, both spouses will need to rehouse. Those approaching retirement age may be unable to secure any borrowing, meaning a future property may need to be purchased on a mortgage-free basis. Older couples may also have additional needs to consider, such as assisted living now or in the near future.

## Inheritance

Protecting inheritance for younger generations may also be a priority and the ownership of the family home should be considered early in the separation. If the home is owned as joint tenants, it may be advisable for the beneficial ownership to be changed to 'tenants in common' at the Land Registry. This means that the property will not pass automatically to the other owner if one spouse dies and instead their share will pass in accordance with their will.

Whilst divorce does not revoke an existing will, it will change certain elements. The will remains valid, however it is important to note that if there is anything in a will relating to an ex-spouse, it will be treated as if they had passed away.

It is therefore advisable that wills be reviewed after a couple separates to ensure wishes reflected are still accurate.

Taking the steps to end a marriage is often one of the most difficult decisions a person has to make, but engaging a solicitor early on can help you to consider all of your options from an informed perspective.

**For confidential, trusted advice about divorce and finances, contact Emily Cannell on [ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk](mailto:ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk), or visit [www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law](http://www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law)**





Paul McGowan



## Collingwood Legal rated “Top Tier” for eighth successive year

Newcastle based employment law specialists Collingwood Legal once again achieved the highest ranking for law firms in being ranked “Top Tier” by the independent legal industry “bible” the Legal 500 2024 for the eighth year running.

The Legal 500 is published each year following extensive research, involving interviewing clients and law firms across the UK with the latest annual guide published this October.

The firm’s Top Tier status was complemented by individual recognition and recommendations for Paul McGowan, Paul Johnstone, Jane Sinnamon, Charlotte McBride and Helen Scott.

The guide includes praise for the individuals in the team describing them as “flawless in their advice, commercial understanding, knowledge of employment law and approachable services.”

Other comments in the guide also include: “Superb knowledge of employment law, an understanding of the nuances of our business and exceptional customer service.”

“Collingwood Legal focus entirely on employment law. This enables them to be right up to date with any changes in the law ensuring we can obtain the very best advice.”

“The team members all complement each other with their knowledge and expertise. If your main contact is not available, there is always someone else who knows your business and your problems well enough to step in and advise accordingly.”

Paul McGowan Managing Partner of Collingwood Legal said: “We are absolutely thrilled to receive this external recognition. I am hugely proud of the whole Team at Collingwood Legal for maintaining the high standards of legal advice and excellent client service required to maintain a Top Tier ranking.”

“2023 has been a hugely successful year for the firm, we have welcomed new colleagues, and new clients from across the UK. This is a team effort and everyone in the firm has contributed to this success.”

“We always aim to provide a fantastic service to all our clients and that goal has helped us grow as a firm and contributed to this latest success and we look forward to 2024 with confidence. A huge thank you to all of our clients and contacts for giving such generous feedback during the Legal 500 research process. Thank you!”

**Collingwood Legal is a specialist employment law firm based in Newcastle upon Tyne. [www.collingwoodlegal.com](http://www.collingwoodlegal.com) 0191 282 2880**



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## Sweeney Miller Law toasts successful year with celebration at Chaophraya

Leading North East law firm, Sweeney Miller Law, was delighted to recently invite colleagues and business connections for an evening of celebration at Chaophraya.

Sharing a toast with attendees from across the business community Managing Partner, Surbhi Vedhara commented on a successful year of continued and sustained growth for the firm. This growth includes the promotion of two rising stars, Head of Family Rebecca Cresswell, and Litigator Charlie Lynn, to partners, increasing the partnership to six alongside Surbhi, Jess Fenwick, Michael Storey, and Damien Todd.

Surbhi also congratulated the entire Sweeney Miller team for their continued hard work and dedication and teased of further exciting announcements for the firm in the new year! Watch this space...

As part of the celebration, the firm also invited representatives from local charity Dementia Matters to talk about their work in the community and attendees were invited to take part in a voluntary business card draw to raise funds for the charity.

**To keep up with Sweeney Miller's news and announcements, visit [sweeneymiller.co.uk](https://www.sweeneymiller.co.uk) or search 'Sweeney Miller Law'.**









# Dealing with disability as an employer: how to get it right

By Anna Ramsden

The average award for disability discrimination claims in 2022/23 was £45,000, the highest of the discrimination claims (including sex, sexual orientation, age, race, religion/belief), with the maximum award in this jurisdiction being £1,770,000\*.

**The Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures of the number of disabled people in employment for 2023 have not yet been published at the time of writing, however the 2022 ONS figures indicate that there are some 4.9 million disabled people in employment.**

Given these statistics, it is important that employers deal with disability properly in the interests of avoiding costly and lengthy Tribunal proceedings, but also in the interests of the wellbeing of their employees.

## Definition of disability

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. There are a number of conditions which can be hidden or less visible which will class as a disability such as depression, autism and visual or auditory impairments. An employer has a duty towards their disabled employees to make reasonable adjustments to enable them to carry out their role.

## What to do

If an employee informs you that they have or may have a disability, you should first act sensitively, especially as it may have been difficult for them to disclose the information to you. Next, think creatively about the reasonable adjustments that can be made to support the employee and provide them with opportunity to make any suggestions. There may be a number of minor adjustments, for example more flexibility in working hours, location and policies/procedures which would be the most beneficial. The quicker any adjustments can be made the better as it will ensure the employee feels supported and that productivity of the business is maintained.

Where necessary, utilise Occupational Health services to ensure that you have a better understanding of the condition and the adjustments that are required, but remember not to rely on Occupational Health reports conclusively when making any decisions and look at all the information available to you. It is important to keep reviewing any adjustments made and set a clear timescale and process for doing so, as many conditions will fluctuate and some conditions such as Parkinson's Disease will be progressive.

## How far to go

It is important to remember that only reasonable adjustments are required and this duty only arises where the employer knows or ought to have known that the employee has a disability that is liable to place them at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. There can be instances where a legitimate business reason prevents you being able to make certain adjustments, for example where it would be too costly (which will depend on the size and resources of the business) and the disruption to the employer's activities would be too great. It may ultimately be the case that there are no adjustments that can be made in order to facilitate the employee continuing in their current role. At this stage you should consider whether there are any alternative roles within the business that the employee could do instead.

After exhausting any alternative options, it may be that termination on ill-health grounds is the most appropriate step. In many cases, this could be a decision that is mutually agreed between the parties and the employment relationship can

come to an end amicably, usually followed by a formal settlement agreement.

What is key for employers is to ensure that everything is well documented and explained clearly to the employee, this will help to prevent any misunderstandings and disputes akin to the one in the case of *Riley v Direct Line Insurance Group PLC* [2023] EAT 118. This case involved a mutually agreed proposal to terminate the employment relationship which was then followed up by a standard 'dismissal' letter (as the employee had requested written confirmation that he was no longer employed), a letter which prompted the employee to bring an unfair dismissal and failure to make reasonable adjustments claim. The Employment Appeal Tribunal determined in this case that a consensual termination, agreed upon freely by both parties, does not constitute a dismissal.

Employers should be mindful of any additional measures that may be needed in confirming that an employee had received and understood any information i.e. by having an interpreter or companion present in any meetings, utilising any relevant auxiliary aids, ensuring that transcripts are available and letters are comprehensible.

***Should you require any support in having these sorts of conversations with employees or any ensuing settlement agreements, please get in touch with us by emailing [hello@clrlaw.co.uk](mailto:hello@clrlaw.co.uk) or calling 0191 603 0061.***

\*Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: April to June 2023 (published 14 September 2023) [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2023/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2023#employment-tribunal-and-employment-appeal-tribunal-202223](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2023/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2023#employment-tribunal-and-employment-appeal-tribunal-202223)



Claire Rolston and Anna Ramsden



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## Dentists get their teeth into helping at The People's Kitchen

**A team of dedicated dentists from the Atkinson Dental Practice in Jesmond has bitten at the chance to work with The People's Kitchen in Newcastle to provide essential oral health care to vulnerable people in the community. This heartfelt initiative is aimed at improving oral hygiene and offering guidance to those in need.**

The team, consisting of Rachel Davison, practice manager, and dentists Lauren Mullan and Phillip Hannon, are volunteering their time and expertise to distribute toothpaste, toothbrushes, and valuable advice to the friends of The People's Kitchen. Their presence brings much-needed dental care to people who often face challenges accessing mainstream healthcare services.

"We're here to help promote the value of oral health and provide support to our friends at The

People's Kitchen," said Rachel. "We understand that many of the individuals here have dental issues, and by offering advice and free samples, we hope to make a positive impact on their lives."

The dentists have not only offered their advice but also made a significant monetary contribution. Through a successful fundraiser held within their company, they raised £750, which has been donated to The People's Kitchen.

The People's Kitchen relies entirely on the generosity and goodwill of the public, local businesses, schools, and wider communities, who donate food and money. No government funding is received, and everyone at The Kitchen is an unpaid volunteer. They currently serve around 250 meals per day, every day of the year.

## SOS Group gives Eagles a big hand of support

**SOS Group have extended their long-standing partnership with the Seriös Group Newcastle Eagles.**

The office technology firm proudly supports the Eagles both from the stands every game day and behind the scenes providing the Vertu Motors Arena with recently refreshed copy, print and scan equipment that ensures the club and the Eagles Community Foundation's day-to-day smooth running.

SOS Group's logo is familiar with fans as an even bigger part of the club's loud and proud game

nights as with the continued sponsorship of the thousands of branded foam hands for game nights.

Andrew Skelton, a Director at SOS Group, said: "We've been partnering with the Eagles for four years and hope to continue the relationship for a long time to come.

"We're looking forward to giving the team all the encouragement we can and hopefully these foam hands will add an additional fun element to game days for young and older supporters alike!"

Based on the Team Valley, SOS Group has an excellent reputation in backing local charities and grass roots organisations as well as across the sporting sector, where it provides support



annually at internationally significant and high-profile events, including Great Britain's FIBA Basketball World Cup Qualifiers and EuroBasket games hosted at the Vertu Motors Arena.

## Award-Winning photographer Michael Rickwood empowers visually impaired people through photography lessons



**Professional photographer Michael Rickwood is focusing on breaking down barriers and developing a passion for photography among the visually impaired community in Northumberland. Through a remarkable initiative led by Joanne Money, Activities Coordinator at Morpeth's Vision Northumberland, Michael is providing**

**photography lessons that enable participants to explore the world of visual artistry despite their visual impairments.**

The unique photography club comprises individuals who are visually impaired but share an unwavering interest in photography. The club's primary goal is to rekindle their passion

for photography and empower them to express their creativity through this visual medium.

Joanne Money, as the group facilitator, plays a crucial role in helping participants to get to the meetings while Michael provides the necessary technical support, such as helping set up the camera and guiding participants during photography sessions.

Michael's expertise and dedication to photography have not gone unnoticed, as he proudly shared that he has recently received three awards for Best Landscape Photographer from different prestigious institutes and societies. These accolades serve as a testament to his skill and commitment to his craft.

"I love photography, it was something I took up when I retired, and I get a great deal of satisfaction from the work I do. I also love passing on my knowledge to others and get a lot out of helping people explore the world of photography and discover their creative potential.

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## Be a Giving a Home Hero

28 November – 5 December 2023

We are taking part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge to raise £40k in just 7 days, and we need your help! **Sign up today** and help people journey out of homelessness this Christmas.







Kathryn Rodgers

## Tis' the Season... to be jolly!

The magic alarm clock. The squashed satsuma at the bottom of the stocking that goes straight back in the fruit bowl. Who can wear their paper hat the longest...

**Like many families, we have our own festive traditions. However, with the holiday season round the corner, it's important for businesses to remember that not everyone celebrates Christmas - and even for those who do, it can be a time of mixed emotions.**

So, what can you do to be an inclusive employer?

### **Remember that holidays aren't just for Christmas**

We have a wide diversity of faith and religions in our region, all of which have their own holidays. When putting your workplace calendar together, make sure other celebrations and festivals are recognised and respected too.

### **It's not the most magical time of year for everyone.**

Christmas is an emotionally charged time with BIG expectations. I've personally felt this even more since becoming a mum.

Whether it's the short, dark days, being away from family, or the financial pressure of creating an Insta-perfect experience, the festive season brings difficulties as well as joy. Think carefully about how you're supporting your team's mental health, including signposting relevant resources as needed.

### **Parties are an extension of the workplace**

If you've organised and paid for an event for your team, all the laws and legislation that apply to their usual physical workplace will still be relevant - and no-one wants to start the new year dealing with a raft of disciplinarys!

Make sure that you're clear about behavioural expectations in advance and think about different needs - a night out in town might not appeal to people with caring responsibilities or health requirements, but a creative daytime event could.

The end of the year is a great time to celebrate your businesses values and bring people together, and there are SO many ways to do that. Get your team involved in creating an experience that suits your business, and more importantly - Enjoy!

**Kathryn Rodgers, Face2FaceHR**  
face2facehr.com • 07946 330 025





## Oasis Community Housing's Giving a Home Christmas Appeal Launch

Over 90 attendees from North East businesses took part in the special launch at The Alchemist in Newcastle. Guests enjoyed colour changing cocktails and tasty canapés whilst hearing from the charity's CEO, David Smith on why it's so important to tackling the issues facing people homelessness.

The charity has set the challenge to raise £70k in 7 days (28 November to 5 December). Special thanks to the businesses who have already pledged their support including Meldrum, Lovell, Utilita, Muckle LLP, Karbon Homes, Toomey Legal, Handelsbanken and Gentoo.

**Visit [www.givingahome.org.uk](http://www.givingahome.org.uk) to find out how you and your business can support people experiencing homelessness this Christmas.**









# Tee-riffic result for NE Youth golf day



Last month NE Youth held their annual Golf Day at Ramside Golf Club, which saw 20 teams teeing off to support the charity. The sun shone, there was lots of camaraderie and essential funds were raised.

The golf day was sponsored by NE Youth's committed supporters, Arian EMS, a world class electronic manufacturing business based in the North East of England who pride themselves on being able to give customers great product quality supplied on time at a competitive price.

The event featured a 'Beat the Pro' challenge, where players had the opportunity to test

their skills against a professional golfer. In a testament to the talent on display, an impressive seven players managed to beat the pro!

Vertu Motors took the top spot with an impressive 84 points, securing their position as the champions of the day. Not far behind, Net Defence scored an excellent 83 points!

The event is a great awareness exercise and allows the staff at NE Youth to network with lots of local businesses galvanising support for the future. £4000 was raised on the day which will go on to support essential work with young people facing disadvantage across the North East.

**NE Youth are helping and supporting 1000s of young people each year. They need your support - if you can sponsor an event or get involved please contact: [jon@neyouth.org.uk](mailto:jon@neyouth.org.uk)**





2023 Annual



Awards &amp; Dinner

ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

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**The Asian Business Connexions Anniversary Dinner event is, without doubt, the largest celebration of Asian businesses and individuals in the North, attracting significant VIPs and celebrity speakers. In 2023 we have more of a reason and need to come together and celebrate the significant and sustained contribution of the Asian community from across the North East.**

For more information, visit [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)







ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

## Words from the Chairman...

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



Ammar Mirza CBE Chair and Founder of Asian Business Connexions

Connect, Support, and Promote...Three words coined to underpin ABC over 15 years ago in an old Victorian building at Old Eldon Square, where there was no lift and every ABC board member got incredibly fit walking up 10 flights of stairs. Today they are even more relevant and valuable with more meaning than ever, especially in a world where we seem to be sadly seeing some of the worst of humanity than ever before.

Connect, Support and Promote are not just ordinary words; they have been the catalysts of transformation, the keys to unlocking the doors of inclusion, innovation, and internationalisation, the three key priorities that ABC has sought to focus on.

We imagined a world where every person, regardless of their background, felt like they truly belong. A world where diverse perspectives are not only heard but celebrated. In this world, innovation thrives, as it draws from rich human experiences. In this world, the bonds we form with one another transcend borders, creating a truly global community.

I am incredibly proud of what ABC has achieved through collaboration and co-creation. In partnership.

Inclusion is the bridge that connects us all. It's not just about inviting others in; it's about making them feel like they've always been a part of the journey. That is why we established the #Inclusionbydefault campaign that aims to help the North East become the most inclusive region in the UK.

When we embrace diverse perspectives, we open the door to a world of fresh ideas and solutions. Innovation thrives in an inclusive environment because it thrives on differences.

By connecting with people from different corners of the world, we expand our horizons and tap into a global network of possibilities. Internationalisation isn't just about trade; it's about cultural exchange, learning from one another, and building bridges that transcend borders. That is why we have led many a trade mission and have now established the International Trade Centre at Airview Park. As

well as establishing government and ground level partnerships with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and India to name but a few.

Now, let me end with a few more words inspired by the late Dr Martin Luther King.

I have a dream—a dream of a world where inclusion is the default, where innovation is boundless, and where internationalisation is a force for good. I call upon each one of you to support the "Inclusion by Default" campaign, a movement that seeks to make inclusivity a natural part of our lives.

In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Let us be the light that drives out darkness and the love that conquers hate.

Together, as we connect, support, and promote one another, we can continue to build a world where inclusion, innovation, and internationalisation are not just aspirations, but our everyday reality. Right here in the most incredible region in the world, our North East.

**Thank you to everyone who has helped make the Awards such a success, and let us strive for a better more inclusive world, together.**

God Bless.

**Ammar Mirza CBE**

Founder and Chairman

## Chairman's Award Winners...



**Lucy Winskell OBE**  
Chairman's Award



**Colin Bell**  
Chairman's Award



**Martha Germany**  
Chairman's Award





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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Finalists 2023... Independent Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



**Kamran Ali**  
Independent

Kamran's hard work in the last 12 months, has helped his business expand to 17 cities, with new services and qualifications in aesthetics. He's thankful for client support and nominations, aiming to top off a great year with an award.



**Mumbai Café**  
Independent

A newcomer to Newcastle's food scene, bringing the vibrant flavors of Indian street food and authentic curries to the city. Acquiring Country Whey in Jesmond as part of the venture, they aim to offer affordable, high-quality, and authentic Indian cuisine.



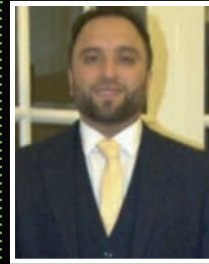
**Viviface**  
Independent

Sehir Amran, a 20-year old entrepreneur launched Viviface in December 2022, specialising in non-surgical beauty enhancements. Dedicated to providing painless treatments with exceptional results.



**Payal Singh**  
Independent

Payal Singh, founder of Arshita Jewellery and Handicrafts Ltd. Her journey from microbiology to entrepreneurship has been fulfilling. With a strong focus on quality and unique designs, she is also active in charity sponsorship and cultural heritage support.



**Peter Saleem**  
Independent

Peter Saleem has been passionate about business from a young age. Over the last 27 years, he's excelled in various industries alongside his parents. His commitment to excellence has garnered his business, awards like Independent Retailer of the Year.



**Airbae**  
Independent

Founded during the pandemic by Kanika Singh, specialises in event decorations with floral arrangements and wedding setups. The venture started as a simple idea to bring cheer with balloons. Airbae is all about crafting memorable moments through unique balloon art.



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**Brewin Dolphin**

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Local Enterprise Partnership

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# Finalists 2023... Scaling Business

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



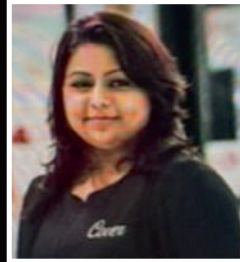
**Surbhi Vedhara**  
Scaling Business

A specialist property Solicitor and Managing Partner at Sweeney Miller Law. She joined the firm in 2002, became an Equity Partner in 2013, and took on the role of Managing Partner in 2021. Under her leadership, the firm has grown significantly and she's a strong advocate for diversity and talent development.



**Mr Bhavesh Vasa**  
Scaling Business

Director of SBV Law Firm, transitioned from criminal law in Mumbai to immigration law in the UK, establishing his firm in 2023. He's dedicated to providing exceptional legal support while actively engaging with professionals. He serves as a Trustee at a Newcastle Hindu temple.



**Uma Malhotra**  
Scaling Business

Uma manages six companies under the name Cover Beauty. She began her journey in Wolverhampton, went on to work in the beauty industry, and now employs over 35 individuals from diverse backgrounds. Her future plans include opening more beauty salons and a training academy.



**My Delhi**  
Scaling Business

My Delhi set out to redefine the UK's dining scene by bringing the heart of Delhi to its restaurants. Their dedication to authenticity and exceptional customer service led to numerous awards, including winning Britain's Top Takeaways in 2022. They've expanded with new locations in Sunderland and Leicester.



**Dr Atif Syed**  
Scaling Business

An accomplished engineer and CEO of Wootzano, is revolutionising the food industry with AvaraITM, a cutting-edge robotic system. His pioneering electronic skin technology, enhances robots' sensory capabilities. AvaraITM improves productivity, reducing human labor needs by 60% for a UK retailer.

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

## Finalists 2023... 3rd Sector

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



**Sanjeev Vedhera**  
3rd Sector

A nonprofit organisation committed to improving the lives of children and young people facing life-limiting cancer diagnoses. Through memorable experiences and financial assistance, they create lasting memories and provide vital support to patients and their families, making a positive impact in the community.



**Indian Association North East**  
3rd Sector

In April 2023, the IANE was formed to promote Indian arts and culture. They organised a successful cultural event, uniting 750 attendees and supporting various cultural groups in the North East.



**The Anglo Asian Friendship Society**  
3rd Sector

The Anglo Asian Friendship Society, founded in 1984, provides free expert advice sessions and fosters interfaith friendships among young British Muslims.



**Pakistani Cultural Society**  
3rd Sector

The Pakistani Cultural Society is a dynamic platform dedicated to preserving, celebrating, and representing Pakistani heritage. Through various activities, it fosters cultural understanding, community belonging, and multicultural appreciation.



**BME Network Tees Valley**  
3rd Sector

The BME Network Tees Valley is dedicated to supporting and representing ethnic communities in the region. They empower voices often unheard, work for equality, and foster community cohesion.

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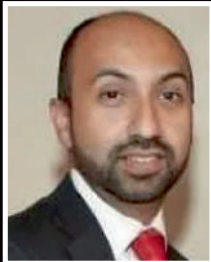
## Finalists 2023... Professional Award

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



**Anu Kaura**  
Professional

Head of Legal and Group In-House Lawyer at the Malhotra Group with 23 years of legal experience. She also serves as the Chair of the Law Society In-House Division, supporting the legal community's growth.



**Jerry Arneja**  
Professional

Jerry is the Area Director for Business Banking in North & Central HSBC UK. He has over two decades of experience in the financial sector and is known for his various roles, including Commercial Relationship Manager.



**Poonam Singh**  
Professional

Lead Specialist Nurse and Chair of the Quality of Patient Experience Group, an advocate for diversity and equality in her role as a governor for nursing and midwifery, and serves as the co-chair of the race equality network.



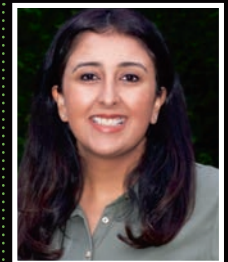
**Sahil Nayyar**  
Professional

A Chartered Accountant and adept dealmaker with over a decade of experience in M&A, excels in transactions involving businesses. He's widely respected in the North East for his revenue-generating initiatives and actively promotes corporate finance careers.



**Nazmin Akthar**  
Professional

An Associate Solicitor at Womble Bond Dickinson, specialising in real estate. She's engaged in housing advocacy, diversity promotion, and serves on committees like the North East Pro Bono Committee.



**Prianka Jaidka**  
Professional

A dedicated advocate with extensive expertise in areas like health, D&I, and organisational change. She champions employee-driven ED&I affinity groups and was selected as a judge for the CIPD People Management Awards 2023, underscoring her thought leadership in HR.

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Finalists 2023... Outstanding Teesside

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



**Dr Rashpal Singh**  
Outstanding Teesside

A highly acclaimed figure in aesthetic medicine, known for his global expertise and numerous awards. He's a respected educator, sharing his knowledge worldwide, and his approach emphasises natural enhancements. Dr. Singh's impact on the industry and countless individuals is remarkable.



**Alt Labs**  
Outstanding Teesside

Imran Anwar, Alt Labs' CEO, is a global leader in innovation and software development. His leadership has transformed Alt Labs, mentoring over 180 start-ups, securing £23+ million in funding, and receiving awards for his dedication to innovation.



**Linthorpe Pharmacy**  
Outstanding Teesside

Linthorpe Pharmacy, founded in 2019, offers free prescription delivery across Tees Valley and beyond, while ensuring safe and high-quality service.



**Like Us**  
Outstanding Teesside

A leading UK business support agency, focused on growth and innovation. Established by specialists, they provide innovative solutions to industry challenges, leveraging our diverse team's deep understanding of both public and private sectors.

## Teesside University

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We are proud to be triple gold-rated in the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023, meaning that the student experience and outcomes that we deliver are typically outstanding.

We were recognised as one of the UK's most engaged higher education providers for knowledge exchange in the Knowledge Exchange Framework 2023.



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## Finalists 2023... Health & Life Science

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



**Aisha Purvis**  
Health & Life Science

Aisha, CEO of Sensmart Ltd, revolutionises HealthTech with Numenyu®, a multi-sensory menu to enhance nutrition in clinical settings and reduce malnutrition. The company collaborates with major organisations in the North East and is developing bespoke software to support healthcare professionals.



**Safwan Akram**  
Health & Life Science

A Cambridge and MIT-trained Biotechnologist, Dr Muhammad Safwan Akram is an Associate Professor at the National Horizons Centre, Teesside University. Leading well-funded research to reduce bioprocess costs, especially in cancer drugs and cell & gene therapies. Developed educational modules to bridge the skills gap in the UK and led NHC's enterprise strategy.



**Imran Ahmed**  
Health & Life Science

A Neonatal Consultant, originally trained in Southern India and later specialised in Neonatology in the UK. With over two decades of experience, he has been instrumental in promoting innovation in healthcare as the Director of Innovation at South Tyneside & Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust. Dr. Ahmed combines his medical expertise with interests in motorbikes, food, and travel outside of work.



**Shkun Chadda**  
Health & Life Science

With 25 years of experience, Shkun is a seasoned Health Economist with over 50 publications cited nearly 700 times. She's held key roles in Market Access, co-founded SIRIUS Market Access, and retired as an Executive Vice President at Genesis Research, now dedicating her time to mentoring.

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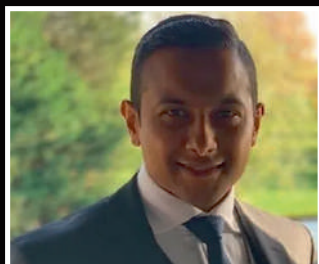
## Finalists 2023... Public Sector

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



**Dr Iqbal Syed**  
Public Sector

A Ph.D. in South Asian history and a Family Support Officer at Newcastle City Council. He's involved with community groups and serves as a trustee for organisations like Success4All and International Emergency UK. He also represents UNISON Northern Region on the Black Members National Committee.



**Jabir Ahmed**  
Public Sector

A senior civil servant at the UK Department for Business and Trade, manages inward investments and fosters international relationships. With over a decade in Financial Services, he's a key figure in job creation and significant investments in the UK, emphasising diversity and inclusion in his role.



**Juna Sathian**  
Public Sector

An Associate Professor at Northumbria University, a pioneer in physics and a STEM advocate. She invented the world's first room-temperature diamond MASER technology and received significant EPSRC funding in 2023. She's also Newcastle City Council's first Indian-origin Councillor and leads initiatives for climate change and community welfare.



**Ummar Hanif**  
Public Sector

A Special Constable inspired by his family's police background and a history of volunteerism. He invests numerous hours responding to 999 calls in Gateshead and Newcastle, receiving recognition for his dedication, including the prestigious 'Ferrers Special Constabulary-Individual Award' in 2022.

## Lifetime Achievement Award...

### Dr Robin Sengupta

**Dr Robin Sengupta is a neurosurgeon who has been dubbed 'neurosurgeon of the millennium' by the Indian Neurological Association.**

After obtaining a medical degree from the University of Calcutta, he moved to study surgery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. Dr Sengupta has worked in the NHS for over 50 years, mostly in the North East, where the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation trust named one of their neurosurgical theatres in his honour.

His vision for delivering high quality, affordable healthcare to people in Kolkata, India, saw him establish a neurological centre which rapidly became the Best Single Specialty hospital in India for service, teaching postgraduate students and research in the field of neurology, neurosurgery and neuro-psychiatry. His desire to improve treatment for Kolkata's poorest people affected by neurological illness led him to set up the Institute of Neurosciences-Kolkata. This hospital was built with donations from around the world and he has given most of his life-savings to this project.

Robin Sengupta specialises in neurovascular neurosurgery and has pioneered brain aneurysm surgery. He was awarded an OBE and the Medal of Honour by the World Federation of Neurological Surgeons for his contributions.



For more information, visit [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)





## Finalists 2023... Peoples Choice Award

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



My Delhi embarked on a mission to revolutionise the dining scene by introducing a distinctive experience that encapsulates the essence of Delhi in the expansive landscape of the UK's food industry saturated with Indian restaurants. Recognising the evolving culinary trends

influenced by the growing popularity of India and South Asia as travel destinations, we aimed to transport diners to the vibrant streets of Delhi through an authentic yet all-encompassing dining venture.

Our approach was straightforward: create an atmosphere that immerses people in the heart of Delhi. Achieving this went beyond the delectable offerings of our Delhi-native chefs; it extended to meticulous considerations such as the presentation of dishes, beverage choices, and the overall ambience, fostering a relaxed dining experience. Drawing from extensive experience in the food industry from a young age, the owners were committed to delivering excellence in customer service, elevating the entire dining journey.

The success of our restaurant concept is evident in the multiple accolades we have received, including being crowned the winner of the 2022 BBC show Britain's Top Takeaways. Building on this triumph, we expanded our footprint with a new restaurant in Sunderland in 2022 and another about to open in Leicester in October. My Delhi has firmly entrenched itself in the UK's food scene, offering a unique and memorable experience that goes beyond a mere meal.

## Emaan Award...

**Dr S. Nath**



**Its quite hard to write about our dearest mum because she did not enjoy talking about herself! However there is plenty to say!**

Mum was born in Bellary, Karnataka into a loving and musical family who loved art and literature.

She studied botany degree till entered medical school in Bangalore. Married our dad in 1966. Practised medicine as junior doctor in UK. She came upon some hard times and lost her sight age 32. Despite this she with dads complete support, stayed in UK and lived quite indepenent life. Excellent at everything she tried for example superb cook. Dedicated mum. Superb memory for flowers and for friends. She had artistic imagination. Loved interior design, sarees, gardens.

It was not easy to live disabled. She had to have many operations. She never complained. She was a glass half full person and very determined. Backbone of steel.

We remember her mostly laughing and smiling. Her friends, really helped her and were amazing support. She needed to be useful and both dad and her friends and wider community like Panditji and Uncle Shukla, understood that great need and helped her with her charitable causes she loved. They treated her with utter respect.

She did much for other blind and disabled people, disabled musicians, children deaf and blind, too many charities to count. She lived a largely happy and productive life. Let me end by quoting my grandfather who said that he was so proud of mum as God gave her the rarest most precious quality. Mental balance. Equilibrium to take whatever life threw at her and remain upright.

**For more information, visit [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)**





# We are ABC...

## Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault

As a not-for-profit social enterprise our mission is to connect, support and promote the Asian and wider communities. Looking to start a business, have an existing business or just want to talk business, we can help. We can help you navigate through the funding

and business support landscape and assist you in accessing the right support at the right time. An inclusive, action-orientated organisation that has made demonstrable impact for over a decade, membership is open to everyone – ***you don't have to be Asian!***



### CONNECTING

ABC is the first point of call for all Asian businesses and others wanting to engage with them, locally, nationally and internationally.

Our network is now 100,000 strong and we can get a message out to over 1million people across the whole of the Northern Powerhouse.

Receive regular invites to the hugely popular, sell-out ABCurry Club events, business seminars and much more.

### SUPPORTING

Exclusive discounts from other member businesses. Access to discounted business services worth thousands.

Working with the All Party Parliamentary Group for BAME Business and regional public bodies we lobby government alongside developing a range of practical support programmes.

We have trained thousands of local people, helped establish hundreds of new enterprises and are recognised as the foremost Asian social enterprise across the North of England.

### PROMOTING

We are connected globally with a number of trade bodies and government agencies, providing an credible platform to link people and places.

Our range of partners ensure that we can get a message out to every single member of the Asian community. From Spice FM on radio, to Asian Standard on print and our own online presence, we have a wide and inclusive reach.

We are proud of our Asian cultural heritage and our communities. But as an organisation we have the honour of being born in the North East.

Our positive campaigns – AWESome Women, Inclusionbydefault and FABupNorth – promote people and empower inclusion and diversity.

ABC will celebrate the work ethics, achievements and cultural diversity of the Asian and wider business community. By establishing a network built upon trust and social inclusion, ABC will ensure that the representation of the Asian and wider business community is fair and equitable.







ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Thank you to all our supporters...

*Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault*



*Thank you all of our supporters, especially The Grand Hotel Gosforth who helped to make this event such a success. It truly was wonderful to see so many people together in one room, having fun and celebrating together.*

*Asian Business Connexions goes beyond the awards ceremony. We would be delighted to have you as part of our special community and become more meaningfully engaged in our shared ambition of making the North East the most inclusive region in the UK by 2025.*

**To get more involved, please visit: [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org) or give us a call on 01661 823234**



**For more information, visit [www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)**





## Feeding Families Fundraiser Ball

Held recently at the Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park and raised over £18,000 for the charity on the night.

Juliet Sanders, CEO of Feeding Families said: "In these challenging times for all charities we are so delighted that our second gala event was such a huge success. It was amazing that so many businesses and individuals turned out and dug so deep for us. The exciting thing is that, as a result, we will be able to feed over 700 local families who are really struggling at the moment. How amazing is that!"

**For more information on the Feeding Families Charity, call Sarah McPhie, Head of Engagement on 07780 150 837.**







## Universal 30th Celebrations

Universal AV Services were delighted to welcome customers old and new to the Malmaison, Newcastle recently to celebrate 30 years of trading in the North East.

We have a long standing history of providing audio visual solutions to those in the North East, starting with OHP's for those that remember, to full audio visual solutions for lecture theatres and collaborative communication solutions for meeting rooms.

***Thank you to those that have supported us over the years and for those that haven't dealt with us take a look at our website [www.uniaav.com](http://www.uniaav.com)***











# How is eating lunch good for your professional development?

In a slight change to my normal articles, I want to introduce the importance of your diet and how this impacts your learning and development.

**We often talk to our delegates about the impact food can have on their focus, and how food and nutrition can affect your work performance. As a business we have shifted away from the traditional sweets and biscuits on a training table to fruit and healthy snacks.**

At this point I would love to dive into the details about macro nutrients and good fats, but that's not my expertise. Instead, I am going

to encourage you to grab whatever you like (thinking healthy) and bring it along to our bitesize (see what we did there) lunch and learn sessions. You bring the food, and we will help nourish and feed your brain.

We have created a menu (ahem) of free to all sessions designed to share some of our learning development topics in a short and easy to access format. We call it our "Lunch and Learn for Success" series.

## Why did we create our lunch and learn sessions?

- Well, I don't know about your diary, but mine is fuller than I am at an average all you can eat buffet. It's difficult to squeeze anything else in. So, to help your busy diary we created really short (45 minute plus Q&A time), learning opportunities that are open to all.
- In a restaurant you sometimes want to try a new dish, but you don't know if you will like it, so you might not want to fully commit. Our taster sessions allow you to explore a new topic or subject or a familiar topic in a new and different way.
- Like a ready meal sometimes you want to grab something quick rather than a full three course dinner.

Think of our approach like a really great tasting menu, it gives you an opportunity to try lots of new things.

## So, what's on the menu?

- Adventurous Leadership
- Health and Wellbeing
- Managing Change in a Volatile World
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion
- AI and Technology in the Client Journey

You can choose to join any of our monthly sessions, and you can even suggest topics that you and your team would like to see. Take control of what you consume and how you nourish your brain as well as your body.

Join us on our launch session on the 8th of November with follow up session on the second Wednesday of every month from 13.00 to 14.00.

If you can't make our lunch date, don't worry you can reheat it and watch on catch up – simply email us to get access to the recorded session on our eLearning platform.

I can't help your diet, counting calories, or advise you on what mix of foods are best for you, but we can help nourish your brain. Surely that's food for thought (I'll leave quietly and thank you for making it all through the bad puns, I know some were very hard to swallow).

**To get your seat at the table for our lunch and learn series, speak to Nevil: [nevil@newresults.co.uk](mailto:nevil@newresults.co.uk), connect with him on LinkedIn, visit our website [www.newresults.co.uk](http://www.newresults.co.uk), or find the New Results events page on Eventbrite.**



30 years of tailoring recruitment partnership solutions to support businesses through start-up, relocation, growth, change and transformation ...



As a trusted recruitment partner, for more than 30 years we've specialised in Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO), Managed Service Provision (MSP), and Project Recruitment.

Our expertise in recruitment project management can support businesses from SMEs to major global brands through their journey - from start-ups and scale-ups to relocation, growth, change, and transformation.

We offer more than just a service, it's a partnership that bridges the gap between your recruitment challenges and our expertise, offering a seamless, strategic, and comprehensive talent acquisition solution.

Drawing upon our deep market insights, expert guidance, and dedicated in-house recruitment marketing resources, we'll collaborate with you to fine-tune your talent value proposition and elevate your employer brand.

Through a high-touch personalised approach, we ensure a world-class experience for every candidate, ensuring they feel valued at each stage of their recruitment journey. This strategy is instrumental in attracting top talent to your organisation, while also cultivating a sustainable pipeline of future talent.

**Contact us today to see how we can help your business attract top talent...**



# Better training needed to help HR teams deal with whistleblowing matters



**A ‘speak up’ culture may be building across businesses and organisations but there is a worrying lack of awareness and training on how to deal with whistleblowing matters.**

**Organisations are running the risk of reporting managers not understanding how to respond when an incident of wrongdoing is raised, and investigations not being carried out in a fair and transparent way, according to some new UK research.**

In light of the new findings, HR managers and directors are being encouraged to review their whistleblowing processes to boost awareness and build greater trust among employees.

The whistleblowing survey, conducted by an independent third party, was commissioned by Sunderland-based Safecall – a specialist whistleblowing services provider. The report and findings allow HR practitioners to benchmark their public, private and third sector organisations against their peers.

Joanna Lewis, MD at Safecall, said: “What is notable from this survey is that, while the systems to enable speaking up are improving and becoming more robust, much more can be done to ensure people are prepared when a report of wrongdoing comes in.

“It’s a positive sign that we are seeing more organisations taking whistleblowing seriously, but it’s concerning that less than half the respondents are reporting that staff are regularly trained on how to deal with whistleblowing matters and how to investigate them.”

A majority of respondents – some 88.4% – have a whistleblowing policy in place, while 11.6% do not. This is a marked improvement on the 2022 survey when 17% said they did not have a whistleblowing policy in place. While there is no legal requirement for a whistleblowing policy, under the Corporate Governance Code, if a listed company does not have one in place then senior management must be able to explain why this is the case.

There are sound business reasons to have a whistleblowing policy in place – notably, to aid management in defence of a corporate liability charge, should wrongdoing be suggested. It is actively encouraged by The Bribery Act 2010 and recommended in government guidance for all employers.

Most organisations provide a range of whistleblowing channels to report wrongdoing through, such as email, telephone, voicemail, the internet and mobile. However, more than 25% of respondents do not offer a telephone hotline to their employees.

A lack of hotline provision hinders employee accessibility to make a report. Joanna Lewis, added: “You are 50% more likely to get a report of bullying, harassment, victimisation or racism via a hotline call than via a web portal. That’s because reporters are more likely to discuss

emotional issues via a hotline service. There is value in a conversation that you simply cannot get in say, a voicemail or a web report.” She added that whistleblowers feel more comfortable being named when they use a hotline, which should enable a more thorough investigation.

The report also indicated an increase in the number of organisations opting for an external whistleblowing services provider.

The report reveals that training and promotion of whistleblowing processes in the workplace appear to be areas where improvements can be made:

- Some 53% of respondents don’t do continuous training and may feel that an induction or one-off training course is enough
- Around 18% don’t train their staff in whistleblowing processes at all.

Safecall recommends that regular training refreshers are required. The more training that is provided, the more likely employees are to feel empowered and confident in their whistleblowing process.

Joanna Lewis concludes: “This survey’s findings highlight a real opportunity for companies and organisations to review their whistleblowing processes, promote them better to their employees and ensure their confidential reporting hotlines and procedures are robust and independent.”

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





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“

*...People who  
know people,  
know the  
difference...*

Dr David Cliff



# The dangers of “radio silence”

In a world of the most sophisticated communication ever known to humankind why is there still so much of an issue between individuals, businesses and indeed, electorates regarding how we understand one another? Dr David Cliff explores some of the factors at play.

**A typical work week can involve hundreds of emails, phone calls and social media postings, this is only set to be augmented by assistive technologies that get our messages out, such as AI.**

And yet in all of this, misunderstandings occur, projects slide, over promising and under delivering occurs, projects go over budget and stress and confusion reign.

The science suggests that human memory and meaningful engagement is limited. Whilst online you might know thousands, your truly closest contacts will usually amount to less than 150. In primitive societies it was essential for survival for one to know, relate and understand people's individual capabilities to contribute to the community, whether that was the ability to grow crops, to defend from threat or specific artisan skills that increased survivability.

In more secure post-industrial societies, much of our communication concerns market forces, wealth acquisition and connection with large numbers in the pursuit of economic goals. We grade people in terms of socio-economic status, age, lifestyle, sector, title and credential. We often communicate with them on a scatter gun basis hoping that the sheer number of communication episodes result in modest percentage responses that are nonetheless valuable.

This inevitably results in information overload as masses of marketing and other information received by individuals must then be sifted somehow. Add in fraudulent activity and recipients become bombarded, overloaded and vulnerable.

Communication then becomes an issue of filtration, diversion, avoidance, and selective uptake. If that sounds unspontaneous and stressful, it is, and we have done it for so long we have become inured to it.

There is little time to process information with email and textual based communications. The receipt of a posted letter and the penning of a reply after reflection, when time permitted, or the evolving phone call now are rarities. Equally we do not need to be particularly thoughtful about our communication as we can always put it right. Overlooking the use of titles, proper names or inattention to the facts, can be quickly corrected and so sloppiness can occur that detracts from communicating respect and value.

We often generate so much communication, and “noise” within it, losing sight of a fundamental human interaction. All communication includes transactional and psychological components. The former includes functionality and the practical reasons for the exchange. The psychological elements are about developing meaning and relationships. These underpin the nature and value of the relationship that exists,

or is desired, between those involved. Being unable to respond to an email because of business pressures might be the reality for one person but can amount to disrespect and suggest a relationship of lesser priority to a person receiving a delayed response. This incongruence with what people can reasonably expect can create discomfort, displeasure or plain anger. People can easily feel devalued. Take for example, the call centre digital assistant that says your call is important and then keeps you waiting for forty minutes, taking every opportunity to redirect you to websites.

‘Radio silence’ is deliberately used by the military, to prevent anyone hacking in and undermining operational objectives. Its equivalent in the commercial world can amount to disinterest and devaluation of customers. It can also mean that communication has not been received in the mode people would like. An email may be ‘job done’ from the sender side, but it is not a real tangible communication for the recipient who was not unreasonably hoping for a phone call.

Radio silence, or communication in a mode that does not accord with receiver's expectations not only devalues people but can create paranoia wherein the absence of feedback often leaves people best guessing where they stand.

## Here are a few suggestions by way of an antidote...

- Foster direct human contact wherever it is wanted.
- Never have an ‘open ended’ communication, get back to people even if the matter is still ‘work in progress’.
- You are responsible for how communication is received. Sure, people put their own interpretation on things, but it is crucial you clarify and hone your message.
- People or prospects? We need to evaluate our values in relation to others. The same goes for staff, suppliers, and even personal relationships. It is all too easy to objectify people.
- Develop real human interest and make the effort to observe peoples' preferences. Not just a statistical analysis of the customer or a note written on a CRM.

People who know people, know the difference.

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





Sam Spors



Lewis Small, Talent Partner



## Why just putting bums on seats isn't the answer within recruitment

Sam Spors, founder and managing director of North East talent acquisition consultancy Talentheads, explains why the recruitment sector has the approach to hiring so wrong – and why Talentheads' unique take is working wonders for firms across the region.

**When Talentheads was launched, the aim was to do something completely at odds with the rest of the recruitment industry.**

You see, the trend across recruitment is to fill roles at any cost. If that's done, then the perception is you've done your job.

I believe that's nonsense.

So with Talentheads, we're on a mission to demonstrate that recruitment is much more than simply putting bums on seats.





THE SERVICES RENDERED TO HIS COUNTRY  
**CHARLES EARL GREY, K.G.**  
 WHO DURING AN ACTIVE POLITICAL CAREER HE  
 BEARING WITNESS TO THE  
 WAS THE CONSTANT ADVOCATE OF PEACE  
 AND THE FEARESS AND CONSCIENTIOUS UPHOLDER OF  
 CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY  
 HE FIRST DIRECTED HIS EFFORTS TO THE ADVANCEMENT  
 OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN 1832  
 AND WAS THE FIRST  
 BY WHOSE ADVICE AND UNDER WHOSE GUIDANCE  
 THE GREAT MEASURE OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM  
 WAS AFTER AN ARDUOUS AND PROTRACTED STRUGGLE  
 SAFELY AND PERMANENTLY ACHIEVED  
 IN THE YEAR 1832

BUSINESS INSIGHT

Instead, our aim is to break the mould. It is a big ambition, but we want to change the way recruitment is done forever.

It is an alternative approach, granted, but the change is needed, our clients love it and we've enjoyed solid year-on-year growth.

It has also inspired our new campaign, which we've dubbed 'More than a Number'.

The idea is to show that many recruiters see their job as nothing more than a numbers game.

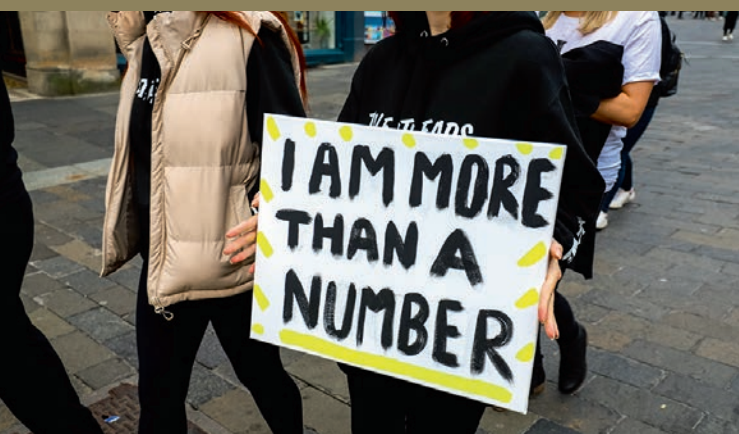
That's not the case at Talentheads. The team at our Morpeth office value the individual and put far more emphasis on the things that you may not read about on a CV. Our core focus is finding individuals who will be the right fit for the company, by matching values and culture fit.

We also dive right back to the basics of recruitment, and why we all came into the industry in the first place. This isn't about putting a faceless person in a role: we're finding a place in the professional world for someone's parent, child, friend, neighbour.

We're helping them put food on the table for their family. We're building their confidence. We're boosting their skillset and finding a role that will allow them to expand on that.

We also encourage businesses to be empowered by their opportunity to employ. Together, we're building communities and playing our part to ensure a thriving and contributing society.

And at the end of the day, that's the true 'why' of recruitment – supporting the people, as well as the profession.



Photos by Lauren McWilliams of Lauren McWilliams.

Yes, this approach may mean more work initially, but ultimately, our clients have found that it not only saves them money in the long run but also time and energy, as we find individuals who want to stay with the company long-term and develop into a real asset for the business.

We recently launched the 'More than a Number' campaign in Newcastle City Centre, with our staff and clients wearing t-shirts emblazoned with messages like 'I am not a CV' and 'I have meaning'. For those workers passing, the messaging hit home.

And they are all messages that form an integral part of our own philosophy at Talentheads.

What we don't believe in is hiring someone who, deep down, we fear may not be a good fit the company – even if that means we've filled a post.

We believe we have a duty of care to both the employer and the employee to provide both parties with the right fit – and we hope that others in the industry will go back to their roots and do the same.

**Follow us on LinkedIn to see regular updates on the campaign and get in touch to become part of the movement: [Talentheads.co.uk](https://www.talentheads.co.uk)**



# Oculus HR launches free HR health check quiz

Providing innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach, the multi-award-winning team at Oculus HR always have their finger on the pulse when it comes to their ethos around 'Real HR', and its application to their expansive client base.

**Vibrant and forward thinking the team with Louise Kennedy at the helm are always looking at refreshing and innovative ways to support clients, with added value concepts receiving much praise, from their popular podcast series to leading industry insight features and case studies.**

This month now sees the launch of their free HR Health Check Quiz. HR is instrumental in shaping, reinforcing, and changing an organisation's culture, and the HR Health Check Quiz aims to assess the efficiency of HR operations and uncover areas for improvement.

The quiz consists of 25 questions and takes just two minutes to complete, the instant customised results (which are processed through an algorithm to produce the final score) will provide key actions and steps that businesses can implement to ensure they're legally compliant, supporting employees and protecting the business.

Oculus HR have recently celebrated 10 years in business and are committed to creating value to businesses, in particular SMEs to invest and develop their HR strategy. Offering outsourced HR and consultancy to SMEs across the region, covering all aspects of employment, including employment contracts, policies and procedures, performance reviews, disciplinary and grievance meetings.

*To find out more about the support packages available for businesses contact the team at Oculus HR: [louise@oculus-hr.co.uk](mailto:louise@oculus-hr.co.uk)*



Louise Kennedy

## Take our HR Health Check

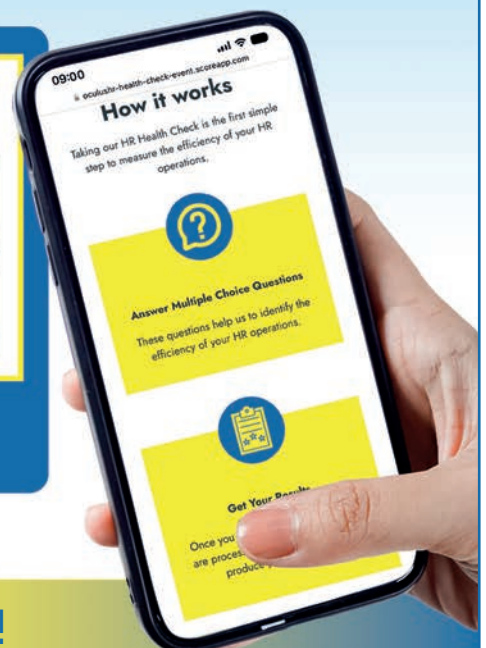


### How it works

Taking our HR Health Check is the first simple step to measure the efficiency of your HR operations.

#### 3 EASY STEPS

- Answer multiple choice questions
- Get your results
- Action steps



It's **FREE** and it only takes 2 minutes!



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[anne.ellwood@durham.gov.uk](mailto:anne.ellwood@durham.gov.uk)





# North East manufacturer marks 21st year with management team expansion



L-R: Freddy Bourdais and Mark Rigg.

**Bishop Auckland based manufacturer Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) was set-up in 2002 by Freddy Bourdais and Mark Rigg, and the innovative and globally dynamic company has grown year on year ever since inception.**

**The team have built up a prominent reputation across the manufacturing sector globally with customers and industry peers. Over the years PMN's wealth of knowledge and prominent reputation has seen the company work with London Underground, McLaren, Bentley, Rolls Royce, Jaguar, JCB and BAE Systems.**

21 years on and PMN have bolstered impressive and continuous growth, increased the square foot to 45,000 with a recent new site acquisition, invested in key logistics and machinery, and the team have this year expanded their management team as they look to further mould their future in the sector.

The main output at PMN is the production of vacuum formed plastic parts, which sees PMN supply high quality and often very intricate

moulded parts to an array of industries. The vacuum forming specialists have over 150 years combined experience in the field and their experience in this area continues to drive the company forward.

Grace Collingwood joins the team as Internal Sales Co-ordinator, with Lewis Rigg as CAD/CAM Engineer. Both locally based, the duo alongside existing Sales Manager, Matthew Whittle will all join the management team to help spearhead the company's further progression in the ever-evolving industry.

Freddy Bourdais, Co-Founder and Sales Director, Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd said: "21 years in business is a key milestone for us. Our growth trajectory has been consistent since inception and there are so many plans for further growth and investment in the pipeline. We are delighted to expand our management team with two new members. Grace and Lewis will work closely with the experienced team to mould their exciting management futures and progression within the company, and we look forward to seeing their journey with us."

The company supplies clients nationwide and internationally with recent client contracts established to Australia and New Zealand. Their capabilities are highly innovative, supplying to the automotive industry, defence, aeronautical, medical, precision engineering and the food industry.

Alongside their esteemed reputation as vacuum forming specialists, PMN are one of the largest stockists of new plastic containers and plastic



pallet boxes. They are also the largest dealer of reconditioned plastic pallets in the UK and are at the forefront of providing a more cost-effective and yet still durable option for customers.

In addition, PMN partner with the French firm, JOUPLAST® and hold the exclusive contract to distribute their adjustable risers (which ensure decking and paving slabs sit evenly) across the UK and Ireland. The products which recently featured on BBC DIY SOS are stocked by Homebase, Wickes, and Amazon.

Mark Rigg, Co-Founder and Production Director, Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd said: "We couldn't achieve such growth and consistency of service without our valued staff and our eco-system of support from partners to clients, collaboration and innovation are at the heart of everything we do."

Our commitment to bringing investment, growth and creating sustainable jobs to the region remains as it did from inception, and the addition to the management team further cements our future growth and vision for the company."

**To find out more visit: [www.pmn-ltd.co.uk](http://www.pmn-ltd.co.uk)**



# Brickies to be taught to use proper pronouns by HR experts to help firms avoid ‘crippling’ payouts



L-R: Rebecca Illes, Colette Farrell and Sasha Warr from Outsourced HR

Building firms are among those turning to a North East HR specialist in order to train staff around what they can – and can’t say – when it comes to “legal tripwires” like people’s gender.

**And the company, Darlington-based Outsourced HR LTD, has warned companies that fall foul of equality law could face bills of almost £70,000 if they fail to create an inclusive workplace that reflects the modern climate.**

Sasha Warr founded the company 13 years ago, having held senior HR management roles with global giants Toshiba and Renault. She said companies that don’t train their staff risk suffering “colossal damage” both financially and to their brand if they fail to create an inclusive workplace.

“Companies are incredibly nervous about the current climate, as there are now so many potential pitfalls and legal tripwires that could quickly undo the hard work people have invested into a successful business to build it up,” said Sasha.

“Often managers don’t know or fully understand the law around topics like gender, and they can understandably feel overwhelmed by it all, as it is all just so fast-changing. Also, companies who are embracing the changing landscape of inclusion and diversity, attract and keep the best staff.

“They also don’t know where to turn for advice, and that’s where we can step in and guide them through what, at times, can feel like a bit of a labyrinth.”

The team of Sasha, along with fellow HR consultants Rebecca Illes and Colette Farrell, have over 60 years of combined experience advising many international household names. Crucially, they’ve never lost an employment tribunal.

And their vast experience in helping companies avoid big payouts has helped the company attract plenty of interest in the firm’s new Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit package.

“We have had everybody from construction firms to GP practices asking for our help to advise their staff on everything from language and pronouns to behaviour, and ensuring your staff are well trained and compliant is a vital step that can even pay-off if the worst does still happen,” added Rebecca.

“If a company failed to take the responsible step and train their staff, there could potentially be an uplift in the payout if they did lose a tribunal and if a company doesn’t have a strong set of published policies, then that will likely be frowned upon by an employment judge.”

Outsourced HR LTD estimate that a ruling of discrimination could, on average, cost a business a staggering £27,000.

However, that’s just a drop in the ocean when it comes to the final bill.

An award for unfair dismissal could set the firm back a further £14,000 while the company may also have to pay an additional £11,000 for injury to feelings.

And with legal fees potentially reaching around £15,000, that could mean a total payout of £67,000 – a fee Sasha insists can be avoided by partnering with the right experts and securing training she insists makes a complex subject easy to understand.

“We are not an external provider or a call centre – we instead stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the

business and act as an HR partner that allows them to run the business their way with advice that fits around their ethos,” she added.

“We have a down to earth approach, although sometimes a claim is unavoidable, having this training rolled out to senior leaders, managers and employees will make it less likely for someone to claim and with better prospects of success”

“Outsourced HR is here to help time poor business owners navigate this important subject by providing everything they need from policies to training, and that can help reduce any potential tribunal claim payout by 25 per cent.”

The company have also issued three key tips to any employers who are concerned about possible HR issues.

- **Treat your employees fairly.** The goal is to ensure every person feels accepted within the workplace and that they can be their authentic self.
- **Create your own culture** by educating staff using our training and policies on what inclusion and diversity means to you as a business. Live and breathe the culture you set on a daily basis by publishing a calendar with key celebration dates for religious holidays for example. Why not hold cookery demos on some of those days or encourage people to bring food of their culture.
- **Embracing diversity** positively impacts the bottom line. You will attract better candidates, engage loyal staff and positively impact decision making and creativity. Ensure you demonstrate your ‘why’.

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





Bryony Gibson

# Navigating the recruitment landscape

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, offers a recruiter's perspective on the current job market.

**Influenced by economic uncertainty and rising costs, the latest UK Report on Jobs - commissioned by the REC (Recruitment and Employment Confederation) and KMPG - suggests a worrying time ahead for the region's job market.**

Perhaps most ominous, the report highlights a fall in overall demand for new starters for the first time since February 2021. While the contraction is marginal, underlying data reveals a fresh but slight reduction in permanent vacancies, with demand for temporary staff moderated to a four-month low.

It appears to be the public sector that is taking the biggest hit, declining at a far steeper rate than individual or shareholder-owned businesses. In the private sector, a modest number of the 400 recruitment professionals

feeding into the survey reported an uptick in clients exploring temporary staffing solutions as an alternative. Rising at a gentle pace, the figures also suggest that permanent vacancies are increasing in five of the ten employment categories, which suggests all is not lost. However, with businesses undoubtedly nervous, the result is a labour market that appears to be in a precarious position once again.

From a recruiter's viewpoint, while we are seeing companies show a willingness to become more adaptable in their hiring strategy, there has not been a significant shift in the landscape toward temporary placements in the North East and so it will be fascinating to see if this trend continues.

Diving deeper into the report it is not all doom and gloom. There are some green shoots evident for employers who will be pleased to discover the pressure that has been building to offer inflated starting salaries is beginning to ease thanks to gradually rising candidate availability.

Regional and sector variations play a pivotal role in understanding the nuances, but anecdotal evidence from our region suggests that redundancies, increasing unemployment, and slowing market conditions are significant contributors.

In its summary, the REC reasoned that the market is finding the bottom of a year-long slowdown. The relative buoyancy of the private sector is likely to be driving this more positive outlook and while vacancies are reducing they

remain robust for many industries with some sectors - accountancy, hospitality, engineering, logistics and healthcare - continuing to experience very strong and growing demand.

What is clear is that depending on where you stand, the recruitment landscape is a mixed bag of challenges, and opportunities for those with skills in short demand. Reinforced by ONS data, there is little doubt that companies are becoming slightly more hesitant to commit to new recruitment in a bid to limit uncertainty and control costs. Whether you view this as a temporary disruption or think it will lead to permanent change, there is certainly a need to face the challenges head-on.

As always, internally, a focus on the development of skills and staff retention is prudent. In the interim, slower wage growth should also ease pressure on employers as it is likely to lead to a reduction in the rise of inflation rates.

For anyone looking to navigate the job market as an employer or job seeker, my advice is to make sure you are partnered with an expert in your field. Someone who can guide you safely through the ambiguity.

Regardless of the conditions, to be successful, you need to demonstrate what it is that makes you stand out from the crowd and, as an experienced recruitment consultancy, we can offer you support and expertise to help you find the best path forward.

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



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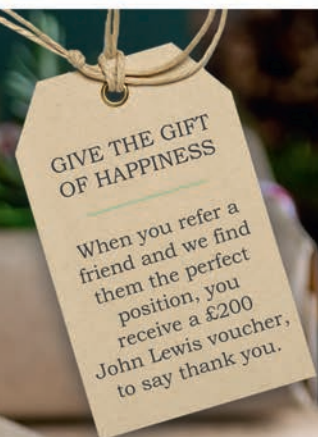
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# Leading in complexity

Over the last few years, the pace of change and the speed at which we are working in organisations has increased dramatically, often along with the challenges and uncertainty we are facing.

**Increasingly when I'm working with leaders I am met by people who are time poor, stressed out and working at breakneck speed. They are often verging on overwhelm, fighting fires as they happen, in complex situations and are struggling to work out why the planned, organized approach they have used so many times before isn't working.**

The term VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) has rang true even more since the pandemic, fueled by a poor translation of existing working practices to a virtual or hybrid model. We're trying to operate under a set of principles we learned long ago – which often don't work anymore. In fact the average life span of knowledge in it's finite sense is two years, which means if a new student is studying a four year degree course or apprenticeship, they're knowledge is out of date by the time they have graduated. Scary!

This complex world however causes us humans immense challenges. Not only does it mean we need to be constant learners, trying to compete with a pace of change our brains can't cope with, but we also are increasingly working in environments which are stressful for us due to the ambiguity and uncertainty. This in itself causes anxiety and means our limbic brains, the part that keeps us safe and is responsible for our fight, flight, freeze response, is in a constant state of alert.

The impact of this on our bodies and our nervous system, means we are not operating at our best. We're making snap decisions based on emotion rather than logic and data, we're reacting rather than responding to our colleagues, often not in a positive way, and ultimately we're left emotionally drained.

Now the pace, complexity and uncertainty probably isn't going to go away anytime soon. We can though choose to navigate it a different way, using the five steps below.

**1. Stop: just pause and breathe.** How are you responding? What are you noticing? What is the issue you are really trying to resolve? Remember – focus on the illness, not the symptoms. They are just noise.

**2. Gain context:** often we view everything through our own lens, and this isn't helpful as it's inherently biased. So look up, out and around you and gain some context and perspective for the environment in which you are currently operating. What factors are influencing your current situation both inside and outside the business?

**3. Question your assumptions:** what assumptions are you bringing to the situation? Are these fact or opinion? Would everyone have the same view or opinion as you?

**4. Collaborate:** no one person can fix this, and you don't need to have all the answers, so reach out to colleagues, your team and seek input from those who may be closer to the issue than you are. Collective intelligence is always stronger and more impactful than one individual view, so park the "I know best" version of you and listen to some diverse inputs and seek to learn.

**5. Control the controllables:** once you have all this input and insight, divide everything you know into three segments:

- a. those things within your control,
- b. those things you can influence,
- c. and those you can do nothing about.

Then focus on the first two. Create an action plan for what you can control, partner with others to influence what you can influence and try not to worry about the rest.

Remember, when you are working at pace, with factors that are changing daily or weekly, you can only make decisions with the information you have to hand now. If new information comes to light, then course correct – it's ok to not know everything. You have a team of people around you willing to help; all you have to do is ask.

**If you feel coaching would benefit you or your team contact Annabel via LinkedIn, [annabel@successfultraining.co.uk](mailto:annabel@successfultraining.co.uk), or visit [www.successfultraining.co.uk](http://www.successfultraining.co.uk)**



# Crafting the future: Marketing strategies for regional engineering & manufacturing firms

By Rachel Skeoch, Director, Truenorth



Rachel Skeoch

North East engineering and manufacturing firms have long been at the forefront of industrial advancements, and they continue to play a crucial role in shaping the future.

**But in an era of rapid technological change and global competition, the need for effective marketing strategies has never been more critical. Crafting the future of industrial companies requires a comprehensive approach to marketing that leverages their strengths and innovation.**

## Understanding the Landscape

The North East's engineering sector is diverse, encompassing everything from heavy manufacturing to high-tech, precision engineering. This diversity is both a strength and a challenge. It means that marketing strategies must be adaptable and tailored to the specific needs of each sub-sector. Understanding the unique selling points and market dynamics of different engineering segments is crucial.

The region's engineering firms also face global competition, which necessitates a strong international marketing strategy. While local and regional markets are important, expanding into global markets can provide new growth

opportunities and mitigate risks associated with market fluctuations.

## Leveraging Innovation

One of the North East's greatest assets is its culture of innovation. Engineering firms in the region have a strong tradition of pushing the boundaries of what's possible. To craft a successful marketing strategy, firms must showcase their innovative capabilities. This can involve highlighting new technologies, research and development investments, and success stories that demonstrate their ability to solve complex problems.

## Effective Online Presence

In today's digital age, a strong online presence is non-negotiable for successful marketing. Engineering firms must invest in user-friendly websites, engage on social media platforms, and maintain informative content. An engaging online presence not only provides a platform for showcasing expertise and innovation but also allows for direct communication with potential clients and partners.

## Thought Leadership

North East engineering firms can leverage their knowledge and expertise to position themselves as authorities in their respective fields. This can be achieved through publishing whitepapers, research articles, and case studies that demonstrate their capabilities and problem-solving skills. Participating in industry

conferences, webinars, and panel discussions is also a valuable way to showcase expertise.

## Industry Bodies and Collaboration

Collaboration is a great marketing tool. The region boasts a robust network of industry clusters, research institutions, and trade associations. Engaging with these organisations not only provides valuable resources for innovation but also opens doors to potential partnerships and business opportunities. In a competitive market, collaboration can be the catalyst for shared innovation and the expansion of market reach, ultimately propelling North East engineering firms towards even greater success.

## Conclusion

Crafting the future of North East engineering and manufacturing firms relies on a multi-faceted marketing approach that embraces the region's strengths. Understanding the industry landscape, leveraging innovation, building a strong online presence, establishing thought leadership, and fostering collaboration are all integral components of a successful marketing strategy. By showcasing their expertise and innovation, North East engineering and manufacturing firms can secure their positions as leaders in a national market, ensuring a bright future for the industry and the region as a whole.

[www.truenorth-marketing.co.uk](http://www.truenorth-marketing.co.uk)





## Creating a sustainable, local supply chain

When we set up Lynas Engineers seven years ago we made a decision that we were going to focus the business on what we, as a team, were good at, and that we would grow the business with people with that same skillset.

**This is of course, a double-edged sword. We are, by definition, limiting the type of work we can deliver with the team; but it also means that, as a management team, we maintain an understanding and knowledge to help us successfully deliver our projects with significant experience and skill.**

The Lynas Engineers team is made up of people with many years' experience of designing and delivering highways, drainage and transportation infrastructure schemes; in order to allow us to bid for, and successfully deliver multi-disciplinary schemes, or indeed most large highway schemes, we needed to be able to call on the skills of other specialists. Working collaboratively with other organisations is not a new concept, but could be called an underused solution to overcoming barriers we have all faced trying to secure new work.

Typically, a highways scheme may require input from town planners, transport planners, various survey teams, environmental specialists, project and cost management, geotechnical engineers, drainage engineers, structural engineers, lighting and electrical engineers, landscape architects, contractors etc. Traditionally these skills are brought together

by the 'highway design team' - something I have done in my roles with large consultancies. We were very keen that we should be able to deliver these schemes in the same way as the major consultancies but importantly, with the personal touch of an SME.

During our years of working at various companies on a wide range of projects we had built up an extensive list of contacts, so it seemed obvious to use the people that we knew and trusted as a starting point for what became our supply chain. I use the word "people" specifically because I believe it is the relationships that you build with your supply chain that make it successful.

A truly successful supply chain also works in reverse, with opportunities and work going both ways, and when it is most successful it becomes a network, with all the members benefitting from being part of the group. It was this approach that led to the setting up of our Preferred Partners initiative.

The Preferred Partners scheme was set up to bring together SMEs from the North East, allowing us to combine the skills of different partners so that we are able to deliver on projects that would previously have been

inaccessible to the individual companies alone. We wanted to find a solution that allowed smaller businesses to collaborate and allow local companies to work on these iconic local projects.

This approach to supply chain engagement has allowed us to build better relationships. As part of this, we have hosted quarterly meetings, allowing us to meet up and discuss issues that are affecting the construction industry, and brought in decision-makers and subject experts to present and lead the discussions.

Last month, I was incredibly proud to co-host the first Constructing Links event in Redcar with Just Williams, bringing together many of our Preferred Partners with companies from the greater supply chain to champion a more collaborative way of working. With a full and buzzing room, it was great to see new partnerships forming and existing ones strengthening. This is why supply chain needs to be (and should be) built on relationships alongside other key factors – our people, our individual skills and experiences are what make our teams unique – and when we bring together multiple, unique teams you are creating an environment that nurtures innovation, creativity and ultimately works better and more sustainably too.

Preferred Partners is a thriving programme, and seeing Constructing Links come to life as an exhibition and networking event has allowed me and my team to see the potential and benefits of working collaboratively; and our Partners would also agree. These relationships are what is key to a truly sustainable supply chain and what pave the way for greater opportunities across the region and beyond.

[lynasengineers.com](https://lynasengineers.com)



# ‘Heartbreaking’ poll of North East business leaders reveals it really is lonely at the top



Ian Kinnery

**A huge survey into the mental health of North East business leaders has revealed widespread feelings of loneliness among some of the region’s most successful CEOs.**

**Over 100 major business owners and bosses from across the region have opened up about their mental health, in a poll commissioned by North East scaling-up coach Ian Kinnery.**

And the unprecedented survey revealed that despite their success, a significant number admitted to feeling alone.

“They say it is lonely at the top, and sadly, this poll is proof of that,” said Ian, who mentors and coaches business leaders via his award-winning firm, Kinnery.

The survey was commissioned as part of his latest project, ‘Save the Entrepreneur’, which aims to shine a light on the hidden struggles many successful business owners and leaders face.

And the poll found that around 20 per cent of participants admitted that loneliness was one of the worst aspects of running a business.

“There’s the assumption that anyone succeeding in the business world will have money, security and thus peace of mind,” added Ian.

“However, this survey paints a far more complex and, at times, heartbreaking picture.

“Many of those polled revealed they face not just feelings of loneliness, but also enormous amounts of pressure, stress and anxiety.

“Often these are hidden torments, pains that are kept away from friends, family and colleagues—and often behind the mask that is success.

“And agonisingly, the survey suggests that many North East business leaders will be suffering in silence.”

‘Save the Entrepreneur’ is a particularly personal and poignant campaign for Ian, who at his lowest ebb decades ago, tried taking his own life.

Thankfully, after getting professional help, he rebounded to help others and currently

provides one-to-one mentoring and scaling-up coaching to entrepreneurs.

His comeback story was capped off by winning European Coach of the Year.

Yet with 63 per cent of business leaders admitting to forsaking their mental health in order to succeed in the workplace, Ian’s now on a mission to help as many as possible prioritise their wellbeing.

The survey will shape a bespoke mental health package aimed exclusively at entrepreneurs, and Ian said he was “overwhelmed” by the number of business leaders who opened up about their personal struggles.

“Even though the survey was carried out anonymously, it takes an enormous amount of courage to write down and disclose feelings that are often buried deep inside,” he added.

“To attract over 100 responses to the survey was incredible, and this data offers an unprecedented insight of the mental health issues facing our business community.

“A big thank you is due to everybody who took part. By offering up their problems, they will hopefully help shape something that can be part of the solution.”

**For more information on Kinnery, visit [www.kinnery.co.uk](http://www.kinnery.co.uk)**

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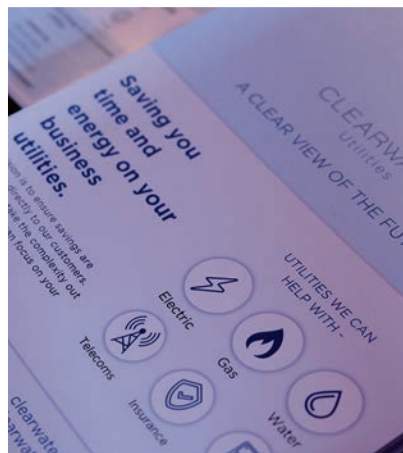
## A clear view of the future

The 'Clearwater Utilities – A Clear View of the Future' networking event was a successful gathering of over 40 businesses at the Port of Call in Seaham. The event was hosted by Ranj Gill, Gursh Kahlon, Mark Price, and Rick Maughan, who were joined by friends, family members, business colleagues, and partners.

**The primary purpose of the event was to introduce their new company, Clearwater Utilities, to the attendees. During the event, the business partners shared information about their latest venture.**

Guests had the opportunity to network with one another in an informal setting, all while enjoying drinks and a finger buffet. To add a touch of excitement and wonder to the afternoon and magician Graeme Shaw was also present to entertain the guests.

This event marked the official launch of Clearwater Utilities and allowed them to establish connections and build relationships within the business community.



## Another clear view in Seaham

Clearwater Developments, a prominent player in the property development sector, is proud to introduce Spectrum 5 Business Park as the latest jewel in their ever-expanding portfolio crown.

**Following the resounding success of Lighthouse View at Spectrum Business Park in Seaham, Clearwater Developments is unwavering in its dedication to delivering exceptional business spaces and homes in the region. This commitment is beautifully exemplified with the unveiling of Spectrum 5 Business Park.**

In February 2023, Clearwater Developments acquired a previously unused building in Seaham, and they are excited to present it to prospective tenants. Their vision for this property is to transform it into another thriving business hub akin to Lighthouse View.

Ranjeet Gill, the Director of Clearwater Developments, said: "We are overjoyed to have secured Spectrum 5 as our next business-to-business project, building on the remarkable success of Lighthouse View at Spectrum Business Park. Despite the increase in remote work, the demand for top-notch office spaces remains high.



Spectrum 5 addresses this demand by providing a workspace that meets the needs of modern businesses of all sizes."

Strategically situated within Spectrum Business Park, Spectrum 5 offers unparalleled connectivity to major transportation links, including the A19. The offices are equipped with cutting-edge amenities and infrastructure tailored to cater to the evolving demands of forward-thinking businesses and entrepreneurs, fostering an environment of collaboration and mutual growth.

Complimentary ample parking spaces are thoughtfully provided, alleviating the burden for clients, colleagues, and businesses alike.

Ranj concluded: "Whether you're a startup, a small business, or an established enterprise, our tailor-made office spaces are designed to cater to a wide and diverse range of business requirements."

**For enquiries -**  
[www.clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk](http://www.clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk)



# The Three Tumours Charity - Tips for navigating Christmas with cancer

Three Tumours Charity, a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing support and resources to cancer patients. With a mission to improve the lives of those affected by cancer, the charity aims to offer vital assistance and promote awareness about the disease.

**With the holiday season fast creeping up, so are challenges for both patients with cancer and their loved ones. Here are some tips to help navigate this difficult time:**

- 1. Prioritise self-care:** Take care of yourself physically and emotionally. Make time for rest, relaxation, and activities that bring you joy.
- 2. Communicate your needs:** Let your loved ones know how they can support you during this time. Be open and honest about your feelings and limitations.
- 3. Adjust expectations:** Understand that your energy levels may be lower than usual. It's okay to scale back on holiday preparations and



traditions if needed.

**4. Seek support:** Lean on your support network for emotional and practical support. Reach out to cancer support groups or organizations that provide assistance during the holidays.

**5. Create new traditions:** Consider starting new traditions that are manageable and enjoyable. Focus on activities that bring you comfort and happiness.

Remember, it's important to prioritise your

well-being and do what feels right for you during this challenging time.

Reach out to Three Tumours Charity for additional resources and support. For more information about Three Tumours Charity and how to get involved, please visit [www.thethreetumours.co.uk](http://www.thethreetumours.co.uk). Together, we can make a difference in the lives of cancer patients and their loved ones.

*If you require any further information, please email: [support@threetumours.co.uk](mailto:support@threetumours.co.uk)*

## Free services for businesses from Gosforth Chiropractic

**As a local chiropractic clinic, we wanted to reach out to discuss the benefits of chiropractic care for your staff. At Gosforth Family Chiropractic, we believe that a healthy workforce is a productive one, and we want to help you achieve that goal.**

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We are happy to set up at your office to encourage your workforce to think more about their workplace well-being. As part of this, we can assess your workforce from a musculoskeletal point of view.

We provide tips and tricks to help your workforce move better or feel better throughout the course of the working day. We can set up in a small area or provide more focused workshops as required.

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# Beaconhouse Events announces support for North East charities as part of commitment to health, education and economic growth



**Beaconhouse Events, a leading event agency headquartered in Newcastle, has partnered with regional charity The Children's Foundation as part of the agency's commitment to support projects focused on health and wellbeing, quality education, and climate action in the North East.**

**In line with the agency's five-year ESG plan, announced in early 2023, this year the team has chosen to support health & wellbeing community projects across the region, including funding The Children's Foundation-led Fuzzy Subjects project, giving the charity the ability to give even more children access to sessions focused on mental health and well-being.**

Alongside support for Fuzzy Subjects, the team at Beaconhouse Events also plans to get their hands dirty helping to plant hedges on the charity's allotment and wrapping Christmas gifts this festive season, all in support of the charity's vital work in the region.

Linked to the health & wellbeing focus, and as

part of their further commitment to North East communities, Beaconhouse Events has chosen to fund kits for the newly formed North East Sporting u11 Saturday team, based in Wallsend.

Sarah Thackray, co-founder, and director at BeaconHouse Events said, "As our societal focus for 2023 is on health & wellbeing, we recognise the need to support local charities and initiatives to help our local communities thrive. We are therefore committed to donating the equivalent monetary value or time through in-kind support, to local community groups focused on health and wellbeing, to match our ethical carbon offset donation to the environment. We're also providing the BeaconHouse Events team opportunities and time off to support societal and environmental projects that matter to them, as well as encouraging them to engage in activities that support their mental health & well-being.

Sean Soulsby, CEO of The Children's Foundation said, "We are incredibly grateful to the team at BeaconHouse Events for their support of our work here in the North East. We run our Fuzzy Subjects mental health workshops in primary schools across the region, using colorful, accessible fuzzy puppets as a tool to engage children and young people in the subject of mental health and well-being, increasing awareness, understanding, and resilience in young people, while encouraging big conversations. The support from Beaconhouse Events means that even more children can

tackle these big subjects, at a time when the number of children in mental health crisis is at a record high.

"The Children's Foundation was founded over 30 years ago to support the needs of children and families at the time, and those needs are now more significant than ever. Businesses owe it to their communities to ensure that they have the opportunity to raise well-rounded, creative, confident, and aspirational children, no matter what their economic circumstances are, and it is fantastic to see BeaconHouse Events taking their responsibilities as a Northeast employer seriously."

The BeaconHouse ESG strategy is based on key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, otherwise known as the Global Goals, which look to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The BeaconHouse Events strategy particularly focuses on Climate Action, Responsible Consumption and Production, Quality Education, and Good Health and Wellbeing; all areas where the business can have an authentic and lasting impact both in the North East and across the events sector as a whole.

**For more information on BeaconHouse Events visit [www.beaconhouse-events.co.uk](http://www.beaconhouse-events.co.uk) and to discover more about the work that The Children's Foundation is delivering in the region visit: [thechildrensfoundation.co.uk](http://thechildrensfoundation.co.uk)**



# Increasing diversity in the building sector

*By Billy Hodgson, executive chairman, Hodgson Sayers.*

I was very pleased to see that Northern Counties Builders' Federation collaborated with Hartlepool College for an event in which ready-for-work young people had the opportunity to speak to some of the North East's leading construction companies. Hodgson Sayers was in attendance and the report that came back was very positive.

**Initiatives such as this are important and, indeed, Hodgson Sayers has, for many years, taken on trades apprentices, many of whom have forged great careers and we have had more than our fair share of the team win national awards for their skills and expertise.**

I came into the industry as an apprentice, as did so many of the people we have employed over the years, and it is vital both for Hodgson Sayers and the industry as a whole, that we have a strong pipeline of new blood coming through all of the time.

One only has to look at the skyline of our cities and towns to see that the construction sector is highly active and growing. The sector in the North East has been very lively during the last two years and this is set to continue. However, it is widely thought that up to 50,000 new workers are required across a variety of disciplines in the UK construction centre in the next three years, with the North East requiring up to 10,000. While specialist skills in sustainability, carbon and technology will be in high demand, there is a severe shortage of general trades and

skilled labour, which is not helped by an ageing workforce and a serious lack of middle-aged workers.

Whilst there are some fantastic further education facilities in the North East, such as Hartlepool College, who engage with employers, it is important that more secondary education pupils are encouraged to enter the construction industry and we need to find a way to begin a conversation with them. They need to be made aware that the sector is dynamic, fast-paced and offers well-paid careers. At the same time, there is a view that adult re-education programmes are not sufficiently funded to re-direct people into construction and this is something on which the industry really must lobby. There are many very talented people who would be keen

to change careers and enter the sector but the financial restraints around retraining, are not helpful.

The sector has a golden opportunity to embrace diversity. To enrich the industry with different experiences and perspectives, attract and retain new recruits, the industry needs to become more appealing and inclusive to a wider talent pool and to take advantage of the changing society in which we live.

The future is bright and we need positive intervention by the government over funding and for trades bodies and individual companies to reach out to colleges and schools to promote the sector to young people.

[hodgson-sayers.co.uk](http://hodgson-sayers.co.uk)



*Billy Hodgson*



# Pearson Hydraulics Gateshead collaborates with ANDYSMANCLUB to brand a new van



Pearson Hydraulics Gateshead has a new van in the fleet that supports ANDYSMANCLUB in their mission to get men talking and shine a positive light on male mental health.

**We also want to build a legacy for our own Anthony Martin who worked at Pearsons and tragically lost his life to suicide. The support that Andy's Man Club offer is changing lots of lives and it is incredibly important to get their message out that "it is OK to talk". They have meetings every Monday (excluding bank holidays) and they are free to attend.**

The vehicle graphics will reach lots of people in the North East and beyond, and it is a fantastic way to share this important message.

Kevin Monaghan says 'Pearson Hydraulics and myself are very proud to promote ANDYSMANCLUB and mental health in general, Anthony Martin had a real positive impact on everyone, which makes the loss that much

harder to process but we will recover and remember Anth as a valuable part of our team. With the support of R&G Fluid Power Group we have a focus on how we manage and identify potential mental health issues, we all support ANDYSMANCLUB'S mission to find one man.' ANDYSMANCLUB is an anonymous, safe, non-judgemental environment where men can open up about storms in their lives. The mission is to support each other and smash the stigma around men's mental health. With over 142 support groups nationwide you can find your closest session here: [andysmanclub.co.uk/find-your-nearest-group](http://andysmanclub.co.uk/find-your-nearest-group).

If you are on brink of thinking maybe I should visit my nearest ANDYSMANCLUB, go for it,



*'Here the team photo shows Anthony (center of photo with glasses on) participating in our mental health awareness week but a few weeks later he would sadly take his own life, not only a shock to the team and his family but makes us all more aware the symptoms are not always apparent.'*

you can have a brew and a biscuit get stuff off your chest and you don't need to prebook just turn up. If you are thinking of ways to support ANDYSMANCLUB remember to talk to your friends and colleagues, mention ANDYSMANCLUB help them to help find that one man. ANDYSMANCLUB are a charity so any support to help you can do by: buying their merchandise or advertising on vehicles or inviting ANDYSMANCLUB to speak to raise awareness in your organisation, all sessions are delivered free of charge and are available to as many men as possible.

**To make an enquiry email:**  
[info@andysmanclub.co.uk](mailto:info@andysmanclub.co.uk)



# Redgate Lodge Motor Group swings into action to support grassroots sport in the North East



L-R: Roger James, former Tyne Tees TV Presenter, Paul Keighley, Operations Director, Redgate Lodge Motor Group; Scott Sibley, Managing Director, Redgate Lodge Motor Group and Jonathan Edwards CBE, Triple Jump Gold medalist and Patron Sport Newcastle.

**Redgate Lodge Motor Group, a leading car dealership in Newcastle Upon Tyne, has hosted a successful golf day in aid of Sport Newcastle, a charity that supports the development of sport and young talent in the region.**

**The event, which took place at City of Newcastle Golf Club, in Gosforth attracted 164 golfers and has so far raised in the region of £12,000 for the charity.**

The money raised will go directly to sports people and clubs in the North East. Sport Newcastle is a registered charity supporting grassroots sport and has provided more than £2.5 million in financial grants spanning a quarter of a century to young talent, sports clubs and events.

Paul Keighley, Operations Director, Redgate Lodge Motor Group, said: "We are delighted to have hosted such a fantastic golf day for Sport Newcastle, which is a charity that is very close to our hearts.

"We are passionate about giving back to our community and helping young people achieve their sporting dreams. We would like to thank all the golfers, businesses, sponsors, and all the volunteers who made this event possible and contributed to its success."

Sport Newcastle is a voluntary organisation that was established in 1968 to promote and develop sport in Newcastle and the surrounding areas. The charity supports over 40 different sports and provides grants, awards, and scholarships to talented athletes, coaches, and clubs.

The charity also recognises and celebrates the achievements of local sporting heroes through its annual dinner and hall of fame. Patrons of the charity include Alan Shearer CBE, Sir John Hall and Jonathan Edwards CBE.

Former Olympic, World, Commonwealth and European triple jump champion, and Sport Newcastle Patron, Jonathan Edwards CBE took part in the event playing for the Redgate Lodge team and said, "Support from North East businesses is an essential part of our commitment to providing sporting opportunities for all. As a former aspiring young sport person, I know first-hand how a small amount of money can make a huge difference to help realise your sporting dreams and believe in yourself.

"When I was a student at Durham University, I

was awarded a £250 grant by Sport Newcastle to buy my first pair of spikes, which really inspired me to believe I could go on to achieve great things in athletics."

Mike Booth, Vice Chair at Sport Newcastle, said: "We are very grateful to Redgate Lodge Motor Group for organising this wonderful golf day and raising such a generous amount for our charity. The funds will make a huge difference to our work and enable us to support more grassroots sport in the North East. We are also very thankful to City of Newcastle Golf Club for hosting the event and providing a superb venue and service."

The golf day was attended by a wide range of businesses from the motor trade and local businesses including, BCA, Manheim Auctions along with Euro Car parts, Bosch UK, several leading finance and vehicle funding partners plus many regular and new faces who travelled from as far as Glasgow, Yorkshire and the Midlands.

The winners of the golf day were Auto Protect warranties with Lee Myers as their captain. The winner of the nearest the pin competition was Adam Findlay from Davison's Solutions and the longest drive winner was Scott Palmer from Lookers Nissan.

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





*L-R: Directors, Mark Trett, Paul Ponton, Steve Hart and Will Palmer unveil Central Employments new brand identity.*

## Central Employment ‘race’ ahead with new brand identity!

Newcastle based recruitment specialists, Central Employment has given its most valued clients and staff a ‘sneak’ preview of its new-look and brand identity at a special networking event held at Newcastle Racecourse.







**The new brand identity, designed by leading Design and Digital agency, Cargo Creative, was unveiled at the special gathering of clients and staff, ahead of the companies anticipated move to their new City-Centre Headquarters at the award-winning Portland House.**

Mark Trett, Director, Central Employment, said, "We wanted our staff and clients to be the first to see our exciting new-look and brand identity as we start a new chapter in the company's history."

"We are absolutely delighted with the response we received from our clients and staff which was very positive and favourable."

"This rebranding is not merely a cosmetic change. We have redefined our purpose and clarified our goals as we continue our aim to be industry leaders."

"This journey is a demonstration of our commitment to delivering exceptional service to our clients and first-class facilities for our team."

Over the past three months, the team at Central have worked with North East creative agency Cargo, to redefine their identity and brand, at the same time prepare them for the next phase in their business journey.

Paul Hart, Managing Director at Cargo Creative said, "Our goal was to create a fresh and modern identity that accurately reflects the evolution and growth of the company, but also honours its history too."

"We focused on combining bold visuals with a compelling narrative to communicate the values, aspirations and unique selling points of Central. This campaign represents months of hard work and collaboration".

The refreshed logo is a modern and dynamic design, symbolising the forward-thinking approach of the company's Directors and the journey that many of their clients find themselves on. A vibrant colour palette has been introduced which is reflective of the previous scheme, but it certainly more mature than before.

Paul Ponton, Managing Director at Central said "This transformation represents our commitment to innovation, evolution, and delivering even greater value to our clients. It signifies the renewed vision and direction for Central."

"Rest assured, the values and principles that have made us successful thus far will remain at the heart of our business, serving as the solid foundation on which our new brand is built".

Within the rebrand, Central have redefined their Mission Statement and Vision. Their mission, to continually exceed clients' expectations whilst leading the way in best practices, all built upon their 40-year-plus history within the North of England. The vision, to be an outstanding employer and deliver first class recruitment and training services in a dynamic, progressive and professional manner.

Central understand that every candidate is different and so is their career path. The new brand and messaging takes into account the three core audiences of Central; whether this be individuals looking for support into employment, companies that Central provide talent for, or those who could now utilise the training side of the business, introduced just over four years ago.

Central Employment is the oldest independent recruiter in the North East, with over 40 years of industry expertise, specialising in temporary, contract and permanent recruitment services across a broad spectrum of industries for clients across the UK, it currently employs 46 permanent members of staff.

Formerly based at St Marys place, Newcastle, the team will now relocate to city-centre offices, and take up over 8,000 sq ft of the newly refurbished award-winning Portland House building.

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





## Government Minister Highlights Vital Role of North East's Cyber Community



Viscount Camrose at Aspire CyberFest, held at St James' Park on 26 September 2023

**Government Minister for Cyber, Viscount Camrose, made history by addressing the North East's leading cyber security conference, Aspire CyberFest 2023. This marks the first time a Government minister has addressed the conference. Aspire CyberFest, organised by Aspire Technology Solutions and CyberNorth, is the flagship event in CyberNorth's #CyberFest programme.**

Bringing together over 350 business leaders and tech experts from the region, the

conference provided a comprehensive program aimed at helping companies enhance their security measures and defend against the ever-evolving threat landscape. #CyberFest is the North East's month long cyber security festival, featuring a range of event throughout September. Organisers expressed their delight at the collaboration and impact the festival has had on the region's cyber security landscape, with over a thousand representatives from businesses, governance, industry, academia and schools participating in events across the region throughout September

## Multi-award-winning agency hires new People Director

**Award-winning, Newcastle-based performance agency, Evolved, has hired People Director, Lou Hassen to help drive the long-term growth plans of the business.**

After studying HR at university, Lou started her career in the education sector before transitioning into tech. She has worked in a plethora of sectors focusing on change and transformation, industries such as fintech, insurtech, professional services, and procurement to name a few. Lou also joined challenger bank Atom Bank during their start-up phase, as well as having experience in SMEs and scale-ups.

Lou joined Evolved from Japanese insurance company, Aioi Nissay Dowa, as their People Director where she supported the business through an ambitious growth phase during an economic downturn and cost of living crisis.

The agency's business plans mean that Lou's role is going to be pivotal for growth. The aim of Evolved's People Director is to focus on aligning the People and Culture activity to the business goals and maintain the businesses reputation for being at the cutting edge of



People practice.

This is the first time Evolved have hired externally at Board level which was a big decision for the Agency who realised the need to have People and Culture recognised at the senior level to align with the company's ambitious objectives, this gives Lou the opportunity to influence and collaborate in a way that Evolved hasn't had before.



## Insights-driven platform launches to disrupt the work wellbeing space

**One Wellbeing is a new solution launched to lead much-needed change in the way that organisations approach the balance of high performance and workplace wellbeing for their people.**

The new platform has been developed by Newcastle-based ART Health Solutions, which draws on its legacy in elite sports science. Following years of working with global organisations on employee wellbeing strategies, the business has used its expertise to create a solution accessible for businesses of all sizes, to build healthier and happier teams that drive better performance.

One Wellbeing has been designed to support people to improve their wellbeing both at work and in their lives, mitigating the impact on organisations of poor people wellbeing and creating long-term workforce sustainability. All supporting businesses to reduce staff turnover, lower absenteeism and minimise costs associated with employee downtime.

The platform provides users with data-driven and actionable insights, enabling them to understand and enhance their wellbeing, as well as perform at their best, by tracking key fundamentals from physical activity and sleep, to mood, stress and happiness levels.

Earlier this year, ART Health Solutions moved into a larger premises at AirView Park near to Newcastle Airport to support its growth plans, following receiving £1m in funding from North East Venture Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Mercia. With high demand anticipated for its new solution, the business plans to grow its team next year and will continue to innovate to lead the way in workplace wellbeing technology.

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# Is managed IT support worth it?

We're often asked – is it really necessary to outsource my IT? What's the point and is it worth the investment? Our MD, Paul Alsop explains...

## **Stay Up and Running, 24/7**

Picture this – your business's network suddenly crashes, your website goes offline, and your systems start acting up. Every moment offline translates into pounds down the drain.

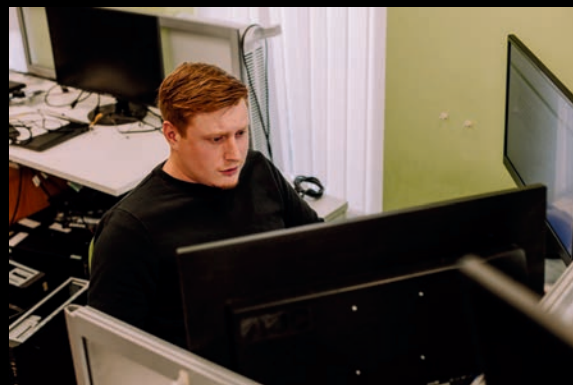
Research conducted in the UK shows that

**businesses lose an average of £3,700 per minute during downtime.**

Managed IT support is your round-the-clock security net, ensuring your business operates smoothly with minimal disruptions.

## **Help at the end of the phone**

“Have you tried switching it off and on again?” When this doesn't cut it, a managed provider has a team of IT experts on hand - each with unique skills. These professionals cover everything from cybersecurity to network optimisation, so when tech gremlins strike, they swoop in like superheroes to fix the problem. An in-house team might not offer the same depth of expertise, making managed IT support a smart choice.



## **Save vital cash**

"Doesn't outsourcing IT support cost more than having someone in house?" Actually – no! UK research shows that managed IT support can be more cost-effective because by outsourcing, you avoid the expense of hiring and training an in-house IT team. Not to mention the costs related to maintaining and updating your IT infrastructure. These service providers offer clear, predictable pricing models that make budgeting easier and enable you to have a strategic plan in place.

## **Sleep easier**

Cybersecurity threats are ever-evolving and managed IT support is a key tool to help implement strong security measures. With regular updates, intrusion detection, and employee training to protect your data, it also ensures compliance with UK-specific industry regulations.

Managed IT support is not just about keeping your business running; it's about saving money, staying secure, and letting you focus on the job at hand. In an increasingly digital world, managed IT support is a must for businesses looking to grow and succeed.

As an ISO 27001 certified organisation, we'd love to discuss your IT, Unified Communications, CCTV, and door access needs and are just a phone call away. Lucid offers a full range of business technology solutions including IT support, telecoms and Office 365 alongside CCTV and Cyber Security. With 34 years' experience in the technology sector, we can draw on our vast experience to make your technology work for you.





Holli Taylor

# Revolutionising processes: a tech-driven approach to business transformation

By Holli Taylor, Marketing Manager, Leighton

Exploring how businesses can use technology to improve efficiency, streamline processes, and adapt to changing market dynamics.

**Business transformation involves reimagining an organisation's structure, processes, and strategies. Technology is the cornerstone of this transformation, enabling companies to optimise operations, enhance customer experiences and remain competitive. Whether it's automating tasks, leveraging data insights, or fostering collaboration, technology is the driving force behind modern business evolution.**

In this article, we'll explore how a tech-driven approach can improve efficiency, streamline processes and help your business adapt to changing market dynamics.

## Identifying inefficient processes

First things first, you need to pinpoint the inefficiencies within your business. You can't embark on a transformation journey without knowing what you are trying to transform. Outdated processes, redundant tasks, and bottlenecks can hamper growth, so conducting a comprehensive process analysis to identify bottlenecks, redundancies and areas with excessive resource utilisation is a good place to start. This will allow you to focus your technological efforts where they're needed most.

## Leveraging data and analytics

Most businesses are sitting on a gold mine of data but are doing little to harness its potential. Through data and analytics, businesses can make informed decisions, improve operational efficiency, enhance customer experiences, identify trends, and support data-driven decision-making, ultimately leading to increased competitiveness and profitability. Data sources such as customer feedback, website analytics, supply chain data and customer segmentation data are often overlooked but could provide valuable information and opportunities for improvement.

## Automation for efficiency

Automation is a key component of process optimisation. By automating routine, time-consuming tasks, businesses not only enhance efficiency but also reduce the risk of human error. Some might argue that embracing automation puts jobs at risk, but when used correctly, it can free your team up to focus on higher-value activities and enhance productivity. The key here is to embrace technology and the change that comes with it. Technology will always advance, but with it, there is growing demand for skilled people

who can manage and troubleshoot automated systems.

## Collaboration and communication tools

In today's post-pandemic world, it's common for businesses to be embracing remote work or for teams to be dispersed geographically across cities or even countries, so effective collaboration and communication tools are essential to facilitate real-time collaboration and information sharing. They can bridge geographical gaps, streamline processes, and provide transparency, leading to better decision-making and project management, ultimately enhancing efficiencies.

## Agile methodologies for adaptation

Agile is an approach often used in software development that prioritises flexibility, collaboration and iterative progress, but its principles and various methodologies can be applied to business transformation. In the context of business transformation, agile methodologies allow organisations to be more adaptable and responsive to change whilst promoting a phased approach to transformation - breaking it down into manageable, iterative steps. You might consider popular methodologies such as Scrum, Kanban and Lean to drive organisational change, with each offering a unique approach to adaptability, efficiency, and value delivery, allowing you to tailor your tech-transformation strategy to your specific needs and objectives.

By identifying inefficiencies, leveraging data, automating tasks, fostering collaboration, and adopting agile methodologies, businesses can revolutionise their processes and stay ahead of the curve.

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L-R: Harvey Trent, Director of Fuzzy Logic Studio; Andrew Young, Director of Fuzzy Logic Studio; and Peter Routledge, Head of Learning Design.

# North East Immersive Technology Specialists to support Aston Martin's Electrification Strategy

Fuzzy Logic Studio - an award-winning immersive technology company - is set to help accelerate Aston Martin's high-performance electrification strategy.

**The North Tyneside-based business is one of six partners forming a collaborative research and development project led by the automotive manufacturer. Following a competitive process, Project ELEVATION was recently awarded £9 million of government funding through the Advanced Propulsion Centre. It will support the advancement of the carmaker's luxury BEV platform and enable a route to net zero, including investment in vehicle light-weighting and a digital toolchain.**

A key element of the project centres around the need to reskill, upskill and new skill Aston Martin's workforce in vehicle electrification. To achieve this, Fuzzy Logic Studio will lead on delivering immersive learning solutions using innovative Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality technologies.

Harvey Trent, Managing Director of Fuzzy Logic

Studio, said: "We are delighted to announce our involvement in Project ELEVATION and look forward to collaborating with all the partners over the coming years. In the quest for sustainable transportation, immersive technologies have emerged as a powerful tool to advance the automotive electrification sector. Leveraging Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality technologies, we will focus on enhancing Aston Martin's internal training programmes to build a competent workforce to deliver its electrification strategy."

Aston Martin is planning to launch its first all-electric vehicle in 2025. By 2026 all new model lines will feature an electrified powertrain option, with the long-term objective for its core range to be fully electrified by 2030.

Roberto Fedeli, Group Chief Technology Officer of Aston Martin, said: "The award of funding from the APC is another major boost to our

electrification strategy and constant strive for innovation. Providing further resources to explore the possibilities of our bespoke BEV platform, it will help achieve our ambition to be an in-house BEV technology leader in the ultra-luxury, high-performance segment. We look forward to progressing this project with our collaborative partners and thank the APC for their incredible support."

Ian Constance, APC Chief Executive Officer, added: "This latest round of funding coincides with the APC's 10th anniversary. We have seen over £1.4 billion of investment into automotive projects since the APC was set up, and I am proud of the impact that we have made here in the UK.

"This latest announcement includes a diverse set of OEMs and suppliers that demonstrate the strength of UK automotive. They will further add to our portfolio of innovative projects and continue to drive the UK to deliver on its net zero ambition."

The other partners forming the consortium are the Manufacturing Technology Centre, Expert Tooling & Automation, Creative Composites, and WMG, University of Warwick.

Based in North Shields, Fuzzy Logic Studio specialise in creating immersive learning experiences that build competence at scale. Using tactile game-based learning principles, it delivers engaging solutions that improve knowledge retention and reduce training times. Clients include High Value Manufacturing Catapult, Anglo American, Tyne Metropolitan College, Roche, Hyundai, Microsoft, and the United Nations (UNIDO).

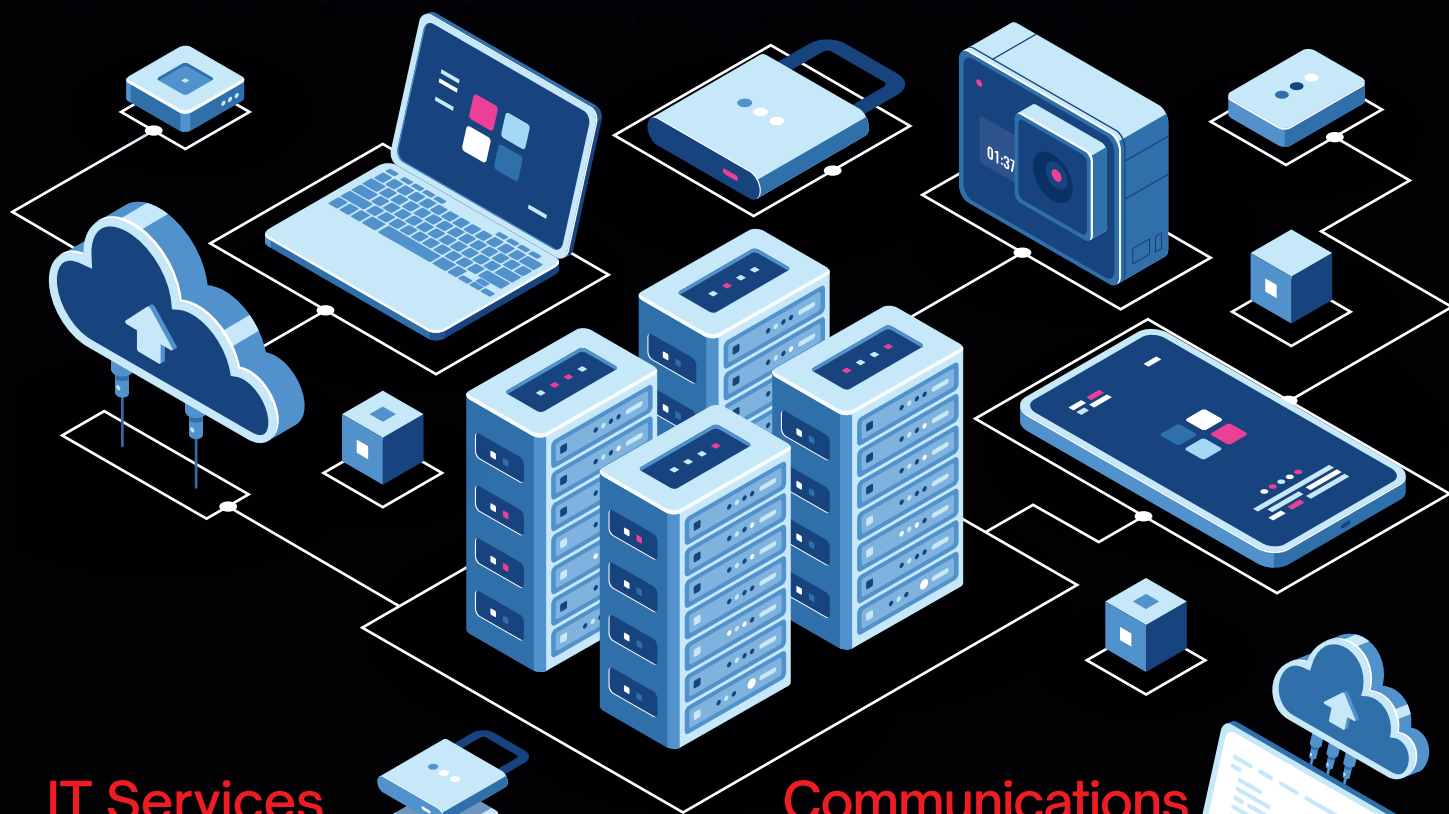
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“

*...Be willing  
to be wrong  
and focus  
on the  
learning...*



# Talking Tech and Digital

*In the latest of this popular series of features Michael Grahamslaw talks to...*

## David Griffin

*Forfusion's Chief Operating Officer*

### Did you always envisage a career in technology?

Growing up, I always believed I would become an Architect due to being fascinated with aesthetics and understanding how things were manufactured or constructed. This led to a Master's Degree in Industrial Design, which provided a halfway house between studying design for manufacturing and materials engineering.

Following graduation, I started my career in the design office of a Telecommunications company, having taught myself AutoCAD at university. Over the next ten years, I started to appreciate my desire for process and decision-making, which led me on a journey through the Project Office and ultimately to the role of National Programme Manager. At this point, I was introduced to the world of Cisco and started the journey I am currently on!

### What attracted you to your current role?

I left Telecoms to create an online platform to assist Cisco integrators in combining resources and stock provisions to service larger contracts. This required me to start and run a small, limited company and own the operations and finance functions to ensure stability and responsible growth. This was an education, and I was hooked.

A couple of years later, I met Steve Forrest (Forfusion's CEO) through a friend on a snowboarding trip, and following many discussions, Forfusion was born. At its core, Forfusion is a people business, which is a differentiator from my previous endeavours, and this was a significant draw for me.

### Tell us about the business.

The concept of Forfusion is simple; a trusted company of Cisco experts that assist the Corporate/ Enterprise sector in operational efficiency through technology lifecycle services. We leverage our ADIO methodology to elegantly guide our customers through the complex set of activities that surround our approach, in turn reducing project risk whilst supporting innovation.

We're proud to have built Forfusion without external investment, resulting in a highly agile entity which is continuously honed to retain its original objectives and core values. This allows us to provide unwavering support to our customers to become trusted advisors to their IT teams, with embedded people relationships and collaborative Managed Services.

The challenge in running Forfusion is remaining laser focussed on our mission whilst ensuring that we have the skills, processes, and investment to support responsibly scaling in line with our strategies.

### What tips would you give someone starting a career in the IT industry?

The world of IT is constantly evolving, paving the way for a multitude of careers within IT from more diverse backgrounds of education or experience. The path can seem quite daunting for someone looking for a career in the technical aspects of our industry. As a business, our CSR and STEM strategy hopes to demystify careers within IT. Our staff members bring their

knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm to a range of programmes to support our local community and educators, hopefully making such career paths more accessible to all.

A tip for anyone starting a career in the IT industry would be to visit local IT Integrator websites, research their CSR offerings and reach out directly. There are many work experience placements, apprenticeship schemes and other engagements on offer that are looking to support your path into this sector.

### What are you currently working on?

I am engaged in amazing efforts from the Forfusion team to bolster our growth strategies, to name a few; we hope to enhance our ISO 27001 by renewing our ISO 9001 and achieving ISO 14001 within the same authority. Having recently achieved Cisco Gold Integrator, we hope to follow up with Cisco Gold Provider over the coming months, becoming the first in the North of England to have achieved both. This unlocks the potential for some innovative Managed Service offerings we have been constructing in the background.

We have invested in a Tech Lab in our head office, which we hope will result in a North East based centre of excellence supported by Cisco. We're also adding functionality to our 40 application-wide eco-system to allow for tighter integrations with our customer base and their environments.

### What is the best piece of business advice you have received?

Be willing to be wrong and focus on the learning that you take from all outcomes.

### What item of technology would you be lost without?

As a bit of an Applephile, I'm torn between a Macbook and an iPhone. The latter is awesome but can also serve as a distraction; I'm probably most at home on my Mac.

### How do you like to unwind?

Outside of spending time with family and playing sports, I like to build and fix things. From cars to DIY projects, novelty cakes to restoring bikes. Always busy.

### What does the future hold?

This last year saw big investments from Forfusion in terms of accreditations, bigger office space, team resilience, staff wellbeing measures and Tech Lab equipment. We felt this was necessary as a foundation for growth over the coming financial periods.

Our best ever half-year results, alongside reaction from both Cisco and our customer-base alike, suggests that the coming period is now our time to scale.

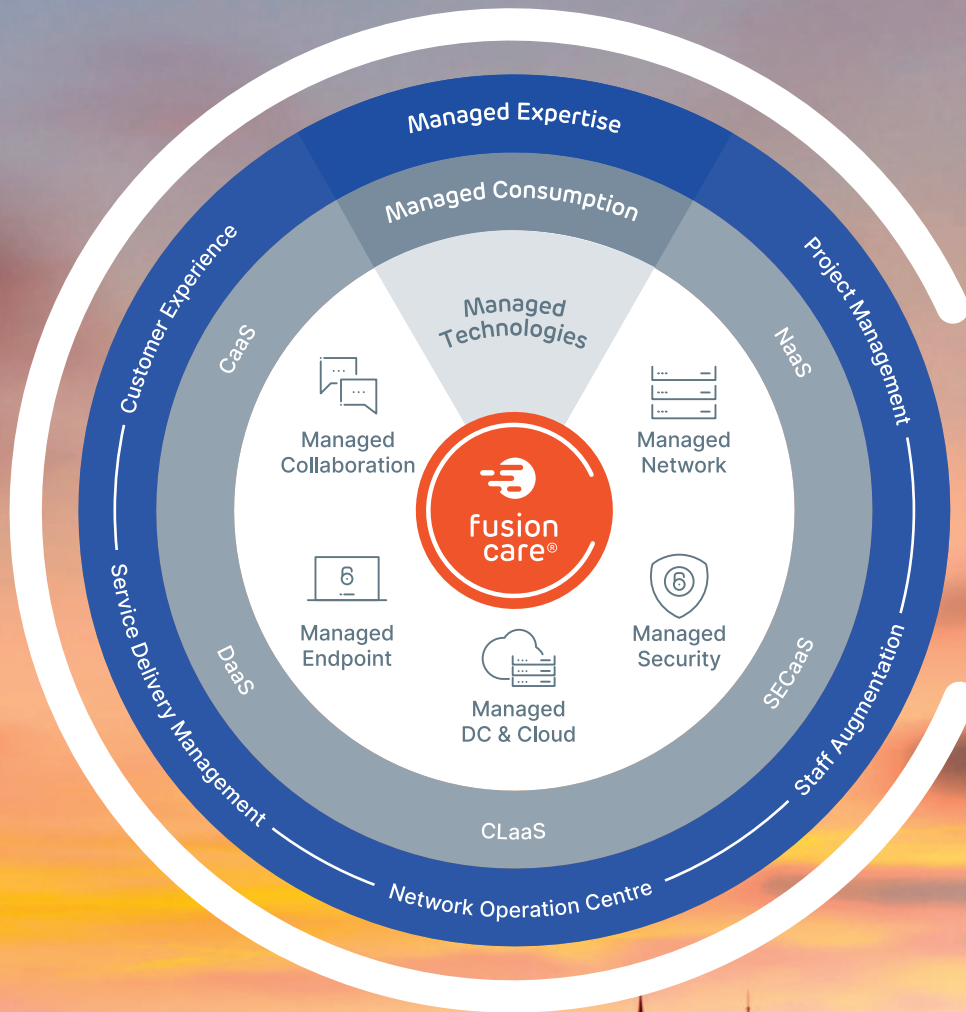
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# Agilico unveils Innovation Day at new purpose-built facility in Team Valley, with Mayor of Gateshead visit

Agilico, a leading provider of workplace technology and telecoms solutions, conducted its latest Innovation Day, which presented the business with the opportunity to also officially open its new facility in Team Valley, Gateshead, which it had moved into just over a month ago.



From left, Warren Colby, the Mayor of Gateshead and Mark Bryce.



**The official opening of the new Team Valley office on October 18, 2023, allowed Agilico to invite colleagues, clients, and partners to witness their commitment to future growth, sustainability, and collaboration.**

The state-of-the-art, purpose-built office facility was set to reshape the company's operations, enhance sustainability, and foster greater collaboration among its teams.

In a visionary move that underlines Agilico's dedication to sustainability and regional growth, the new facility combined two separate offices into one modern, energy-efficient building. The decision aligns with the company's commitment to reducing its environmental impact and creating a more sustainable future for Gateshead.

The Mayor of Gateshead, Councillor Eileen McMaster, who attended the Innovation Day, expressed her enthusiasm for the project. She said: "It was fantastic to attend this Innovation Day to see first-hand, not only this great facility, purpose-built for Agilico, and which clearly demonstrates their commitment to sustainability in Gateshead, but also to hear more about how they were supporting other businesses with innovative solutions that help to fight climate change. It is crucial that we all think about ways we can be more eco-conscious, and I am proud that businesses, such as Agilico, based here in Gateshead, have fully committed to doing this."

The 20,000 sq. foot facility is designed to maximise efficiency and productivity, providing an exceptional working environment for Agilico's employees. Moreover, Agilico had invested in cutting-edge technology to measure and monitor energy consumption, in line with their commitment to ISO 14001 standards and their pursuit of achieving net-zero emissions.





Warren Colby heads up the entire northern operation, including offices in the Midlands, Manchester, York, and Gateshead and explained the significance of this move, stating: "Not only is this new facility a more energy-efficient, economical, brighter building for us, but it combined two sites. We consolidated operations and are developing working synergies, as well as fostering that all-important sense of collaboration."

"We are unapologetically proud of our approach and innovation in sustainability and people, and the Innovation Day presented us with the opportunity for our community to see it in action for themselves."

The consolidated office space initially accommodates approximately 70 employees across various departments, including finance, sales, IT and telecoms support, engineering, human resources, account management, and business development teams. This move aims to encourage better communication and collaboration among different teams, fostering a more united and efficient workforce.

Agilico's investment extends beyond infrastructure; it demonstrates their commitment to creating job opportunities and contributing to the local community's growth. The company is actively seeking talent to fill roles in business development, finance, account management, and support engineering.

Mark Bryce, Sales Director, added, "We're looking for individuals who share our passion for technology and sustainability. This move opened up exciting possibilities for career growth and development in the North East."



## Agilico - national reach

**450 colleagues • 17 UK sites  
14,000 customers • Net zero 2030 plan**



This remarkable development marked a significant step forward for Agilico, positioning them as a leader in sustainable business practices and regional growth.

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





L-R: eQS Group CEO Michael Hall, eQS Group MD Andy Gough, eQS Group head of people and culture, Camila Williams-Johnson and EW founder Femi Otitoju.

# New leadership team for eQuality Solutions Group

National diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) specialist, eQuality Solutions Group (eQS), has unveiled its new senior leadership team, which is spearheading a major investment programme and targeting further acquisitions.

**Chief executive, Michael Hall, group managing director, Andy Gough, group head of people and culture, Camila Williams-Johnson and founder, Femi Otitoju, lead a rapidly-growing business that has seen a £20 million funding package and the acquisition of four niche companies in the last three years.**

eQS Group provides DEI services and products including consultancy, assistive technology, training, e-learning, mentoring, learning support and assessment of learning disabilities across workplaces and higher educational settings.

The firm, which is headquartered in Hebburn, has doubled Group turnover and increased its headcount from 40 to 100 in the last 24 months. A further 20 jobs are being created, including a DEI project manager for the workplace sector, mental health and Autism Spectrum Condition

(ASC) mentors for higher education and an apprentice to support the People and Culture team.

In 2020, eQS secured a £20 million funding package from London-based Shard Credit Partners, which has seen it acquire and integrate four businesses - DEI training and consultancy businesses, Equality Works Group (EW Group) and the Challenge Consultancy, as well as educational psychologists, The Educational Guidance Service (EGS) and Non-Medical Help providers, Amano.

In line with its growth strategy, the restructure of the senior team has seen Michael Hall move into the position of chief executive, from chief financial officer. He will lead the next stage of growth, which will see continuing acquisitions, expansion into key sectors of higher education, finance and 'creative and culture' and the

development of new revenue streams. The strategy also includes the launch of a new, inclusive recruitment service, which will match neurodiverse talent to higher education opportunities and inclusive job vacancies.

Since becoming chief executive, Michael has prioritised the Group's people proposition with the aim of harnessing its inhouse DEI expertise to build a leading, inclusive culture and experience internally, developing an infrastructure that can support the next phase of growth and integrating the acquired businesses to ensure a unified culture. Supported by an experienced leadership team, Andy Gough being responsible for operational excellence, Camila Williams-Johnson on people and culture and Femi Otitoju on DEI.

Michael Hall, said: "When we embarked upon our acquisition strategy in 2020, we knew we had a good business that did good things, but we operated in a niche market that limited our growth potential.

"We've now successfully acquired and integrated four businesses, with each one adding incremental value to our offering. We are one of the largest independent businesses in our sector in the UK and have deep specialism across all areas of inclusion. I'm extremely proud to have built that from our North East base with a total of four offices across the country, including London."

[e-q-s.com](https://www.e-q-s.com)



# razorblue creates new role to support ambitious plans

A leading managed service provider which works with over 500 companies across the UK and has consistently grown significantly year-on-year, has created a new role as part of its ongoing ambitious plans – Head of New Business.

**North East headquartered razorblue, which boasts seven offices and a team of over 180 people, has welcomed George Galloway to the team, an experienced commercial director with over 37 years in the industry, tasked with developing and deploying new sales strategies and initiatives that ensure razorblue continues to be recognised as a leading managed services, cloud and cyber security provider in the UK.**

George said: “I’m excited to join the team at razorblue and play a part in its continued success. During my career I’ve achieved a high level of success in creating strong client relationships, selling complex products and solutions, and achieving targets through delivering effective programme management, strategic planning and team leadership – so I am confident that I can work with the company’s award-winning team to continue its growth trajectory journey.

“I have an in-depth knowledge of public and private sector tender frameworks at all levels which is something I am looking forward to focusing on here at razorblue, but most of all, I’m excited to help onboard new clients and see their continued success being supported by our strategic IT support and managed services.”

George’s experience includes developing a business from a £3 million to £20 million turnover organisation with £15 million recurring revenue,



George Galloway

and in his most recent role, achieving a record 60% revenue growth in a 12-month period.

Dan Kitchen, CEO of razorblue said: “We are always keen to add skilled people to our team and George is exactly that – he brings a raft of experience to the senior leadership team as well as innovative ideas to support our sales and marketing function, and I’m looking forward to working with him.”

razorblue now has a headcount exceeding 180, with plans to recruit over 25 additional team members in the next 12 months to support its plans to continue expanding its nationwide coverage and adding more products and services to the current offering.

razorblue specialises in managed IT, security services, super-fast connectivity, cloud and hosting and business software solutions across a broad range of industries.

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## International brand hotel in Newcastle hits market for £31.8m

**Knight Frank has been appointed to sell the well-invested, 274-bedroom, upper-midscale Leonardo hotel - at St James Gate in Newcastle city centre - on behalf of a UK investment fund.**

The vendor is seeking offers over £31.8 million for the hotel which is let to Leonardo Hotel Management (UK) Limited for the next 14.4 years and has a passing rent of £2,888,054 per annum.

Formerly a Jury's Inn, the Leonardo Hotel was rebranded and refurbished in 2022 and is one of 52 Leonardo Hotels across the UK and Ireland – owned by the Fattal Hotel Group.

If sold for £31.8m, the purchaser can expect a running yield of around 8.5% this year, rising to 9.86% in 2028, and 11.05% in 2033.

Partner at Knight Frank, Charlie Fletcher, is expecting interest to be high: "This is a well-located, recently rebranded city centre hotel only a few minutes' walk from Newcastle Central train station and it is operated by a well-known international brand. The investment is priced attractively and at the quoted price it is also substantially underpinned by its vacant possession value."

Newcastle has been one of the UK's best performing hotel markets post-pandemic, with 2022 Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) over 15% higher than in 2019. With an Average Daily Rate (ADR) of £69, Newcastle has the lowest ADR of all the regional markets, presenting an attractive proposition for budget-friendly overnight stays.

Due to rising inflation, ADRs have increased significantly across the UK, however, Newcastle was the only market out of all comparable cities to experience occupancy growth. In 2022 occupancy was 74.2% compared to 73.2% in 2019.



## CAN's Business Resilience event fuels optimism for North East construction sector

**Construction Alliance North East (CAN) chair Ken Parkin has hopes for a prosperous 2024 for the North East construction sector after hosting a Building Business Resilience event recently.**

CAN organised the event for regional businesses after multiple contractors fell into administration or encountered difficulties through 2023 as the cost-of-living crisis deepened.

Partnering with James Lumb from Interpath Advisory and Jane Garvin from Ward Hadaway, the event welcomed almost 40 decision makers from key SME contractors and other organisations and served to provide practical, commercial and legal tips to navigate challenging times.

Parkin said the session was a real success, adding: "This is a subject that is not easy to talk about and it can make people uneasy, but it's one that needs to be tackled head on. It was great to see representation of the built environment during the session so that the CAN team could understand in more detail the challenges that businesses are facing."

## Major investment and refurb at former Royal Mail base delivers 40,000 sq. ft. of industrial space

**Over £500,000 of investment to refurbish a former Royal Mail depot in North Tyneside has delivered a much-needed 40,000 sq. ft. of quality industrial space to the under-supplied North East commercial property market.**

Extensive work to restore the warehouse property at Balliol Business Park to 'as-new' condition has been completed by commercial property consultancy, Naylor's Gavin Black.

Following the departure of Royal Mail, owner Buccleuch Property appointed Naylor's Gavin Black to carry out the dilapidation work, project manage a complete refurbishment, manage the building and market the space for let.

Keith Stewart, partner at Naylor's Gavin Black, comments: "The building has been completely overhauled as the previous use was manufacturing and the property was in some disrepair. The roof, cladding and gutters have received a new covering whilst the offices have new LED lighting, carpeting, WCs. The externals have had improvements to cut back vegetation as part of the transformation."



"Warehousing/manufacturing space of this size is in dire short supply in the region and particularly North Tyneside, so interest is expected to be high. The location is also prime given its good access to the A1 and A19 and situated opposite Quorum Business Park with excellent bus routes and close to the Metro."

The property comprises approximately 32,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space and 8,000 sq. ft. of open plan office space set over two floors with a double height reception, canteen, 54 parking spaces and a secure yard.

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## 20th Anniversary celebrations for Property Search North East

We had an unforgettable night celebrating our 20th anniversary with our wonderful clients, friends and colleagues.

Though many know us, Property Search North East remains the best-kept secret for conveyancing searches. Beyond just searches, we pride ourselves on collaboration, helping our clients gain more opportunities through the NE Property Collective as well as it being an educational event for landlords and investors, which we proudly founded.

Here's to working together and achieving even more in the years to come!











# youngsRPS, managing your rental properties successfully

Investing in rental properties can be a lucrative endeavour, but it's not without its challenges. From finding suitable tenants to handling maintenance requests and navigating the complexities of the rental market, property management requires time, expertise, and dedication.

**This is where youngsRPS step in, playing a crucial role in managing residential, commercial, and rural rental properties. Teresa Sargeant, Residential Lettings Manager with YoungsRPS, explores the importance of using estate agents to manage your property portfolio.**

## Tenant Screening

One of the most critical aspects of managing rental properties is finding reliable tenants. youngsRPS has the experience and resources to thoroughly screen potential tenants. We conduct background checks, verify references, and assess credit histories, reducing the risk of problematic tenants who may cause property damage or fail to pay rent. This careful selection process helps protect your investment.

## Marketing Expertise

youngsRPS are skilled in marketing properties effectively and create appealing listings, utilising various advertising platforms, and leverage our network to find qualified tenants quickly. This

results in reduced vacancies, which maximizes your rental income.

## Legal Knowledge

Rental property management involves a complex web of regulations, laws, and contracts. Our lettings experts are well-versed in these legalities, ensuring that your property adheres to all regulations, helping you avoid legal pitfalls.

## Property Maintenance

Proper maintenance is essential for keeping your rental property in top condition and attracting long-term tenants. We have a network of reliable contractors and maintenance professionals we can call upon. This ensures timely repairs and maintenance, preserving the value of your investment.

## Rent Collection

We can also manage rent collection, relieving you of the often-stressful task of chasing late

payments, establishing, and enforcing rent collection policies, ensuring a steady stream of income. In cases of non-payment, we can take the necessary legal actions to protect your interests.

## Time and Stress Savings

Hiring youngsRPS to manage your rental property allows you to enjoy a more hands-off approach to property ownership. You won't have to deal with the daily stresses of property management, giving you more time to focus on other aspects of your life or invest in additional properties.

## Market Knowledge

We have our fingers on the pulse of the rental market and can provide valuable insights into market trends, helping you adjust rent prices to maximize income. This knowledge also aids in strategic decisions like when to sell or acquire new properties.

Using experienced estate agents, like youngsRPS to manage your rental properties can be a game-changer for property investors. Our expertise in tenant screening, marketing, legal matters, maintenance, rent collection, and market knowledge provides invaluable support. By leveraging our skills, you can protect your investment, increase your rental income, and enjoy a stress-free experience as a property owner. While estate agent services come with a fee, the benefits they bring far outweigh the costs, making us an essential partner in the world of rental property management.

***If you'd like to learn more about youngsRPS and their rental property experts visit [www.youngsrps.com](http://www.youngsrps.com)***





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Neil Turner

## Green Belt – how do we develop it (and safeguard it), for the future?

By Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield

I wrote in Northern Insight last year about green belts and how and what should happen to them. Last year we had two Conservative candidates in Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss with very different views on how to get development moving forward.

**Fast forward a year and we have Labour advocating development in the green belt and developing 1.5m new homes over five years in comparison to the Prime Minister's decision to scrap national house building targets.**

So, without being political, how are we going to achieve this and how is development in the green belt ever going to be possible.

Green areas have been appreciated since the Victorians built parks for workers to enjoy. The advent of trains allowed people to easily travel outside the towns. The term green belt was invented in the 1920s and seen as a buffer zone between the commercial zones of towns and their residential areas. In the 1930s local authorities bought land around London and created a green belt. It was only post war when we had the 1947 Planning Act, which allowed the green belts as we know them to be created in the planning circular of 1955.

I think it is good to have a sensible modern debate on what is applicable and appropriate in the countryside. It is not meant to be a total no to development.

The current planning system allows exemptions and development (in green belt zones); however, the system is adversarial and slow, with each local authority often interpreting matters in very different ways.

Last year I said development should be allowed in the green belt. To get the right balance I would place a higher bar on development standards, in terms of the standard of architectural design and for specific purposes. I do not want to see generic houses across the fields, but beautiful well considered housing estates can (and should) fit in.

The ability to build should not be just social housing, but housing at all levels and values to create the variety we all need to accommodate

all of society's needs. Wiser people than I, are better placed to decide how that might be calculated.

Innovation and experimental houses (known as Paragraph 80 houses) are incredibly hard to pass through planning but when built, can help mass housing improve through greater knowledge of building techniques, insulation, and heating systems.

We need to encourage business in the countryside, and I would advocate changes to current laws to actively encourage working opportunities. Then housing can naturally follow when there is a real need for people to live locally.

We must develop land and brown field first in our urban areas and therefore planning should encourage this first and foremost, before looking at countryside. My simple suggestion is that the green belt should then be graded, perhaps with different greens. This would make it far clearer regarding land adjacent to towns and cities what type of development might be considered acceptable. I would also make clear those areas, special or historic, that are too important to be touched.

We must look to alter the current system, which is so black and white, with its polarising positions to a graded or blended position on a 'varying green belt'. I think this would assist our town planners and local authorities in guiding sustainable development for the future.

**Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email [n.turner@hlpuk.com](mailto:n.turner@hlpuk.com) [www.howarthlitchfield.com](http://www.howarthlitchfield.com)**



The continued  
adventures of...

# Ziggy and Cally!



Hi everyone,

**Well all of the naughty puppies have gone – just me and Cally again. Starting to get cold now – have to dig my WDL gilet out for the winter. I love the dark nights, snuggled in front of the fire. Although cold walks in the mornings freeze my old paws.**

**Soon to be Xmas and yummy tripe cakes.**

**See you soon, Ziggy.**

**Q:** For thirteen years since our house was built we have had difficulty with paint peeling from the window frames, mainly the drip bars. The builder prevaricated and delayed for five years so we went to NHBC who declined our case because we had only informed the builder, not the developer, both with the same address, same tel number and same staff!

No matter whether peeling paint is stripped to the bare wood, primed, undercoated and top coated, it always peels – sometimes within a few months. I have tried the paint manufacturers for solutions and followed their instructions to the letter but to no avail.

I am beginning to think my only option is to have all the glazing bars removed and replaced because there seems to be some problem with the wood. What would your advice be, please?

**A:** I can't say why your window frames won't hold a coat of paint

without inspecting them. Some species of hardwood are oily and difficult to paint, and some cuts of softwood can be resinous, and also resist painting. You don't say if you are using oil-based paint or water-based acrylic paint – the former is likely to give better results.

Also you mention there being a particular problem with the glazing bars, and I wonder if these windows are glazed using traditional putty. If so, and if you have been using water-based paint, then it would explain the problem – the linseed oil in the putty will not take a coat of water-based paint. And perhaps some of the linseed oil has also impregnated the adjacent timber, with similar results?

Try again, using a good oil-based painting system, perhaps starting with an aluminium-oxide primer, which is usually the best first coat for problem timber.



**Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: [wdlnortheast.co.uk](http://wdlnortheast.co.uk) or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on [michael@northern-insight.co.uk](mailto:michael@northern-insight.co.uk)**



## “Oh the weather outside is frightful...”

It cannot escape people's attention how wet and windy it is at the moment. We are all used to hearing stories of global warming, and I think almost everyone accepts that the planet is getting warmer.

**The argument is to what the cause is. There is clearly an upward trend though and since last spring we seemed to have had far more wet and windy days than dry and still.**

The Meteorological Office has said that overall the weather is getting drier with less rainfall, something which I don't think people in Scotland need to hear, or for that matter Whitley Bay or South Shields – see the lighthouse at Tynemouth.



But what has this got to do with property? Well there are two things, which are interrelated.



Philip M Bowe

Firstly, we can stop doing the things that have a negative effect on climate change, and secondly we can start doing things that have a positive effect. A positive effect may be to take advantage of the warming to introduce solar panels more readily across building structures. The add on cost for post construction introduction can be prohibitive for some, but they can be incorporated into new builds fairly readily. We can look at wind power - people complain of the large wind turbines at Blyth and in the Northumberland and Durham hills, and I think in honesty they do rather spoil the landscape. However, small wind turbines can be used to supplement household energy supplies. Wind turbines and solar panels can be used together, so we can get energy whether its nice and sunny or horrible and windy – which seems a fairly good idea.

But on the flip side of the coin, what can we stop doing that causes problems? Well let's get as much open earth as we can around our properties. A trend that started in the 1980's really was to concrete over garden areas, often to provide extra car parking spaces, and also the introduction of imitation turf for ease of garden maintenance. These are all very well and good but water cannot drain through imprinted concrete or through plastic backed

fake grass as it can through open earth and grassland. I think its time we all seriously looked at the amount of open natural land we are effectively suffocating by features such as these and see what we can do to reduce them. If we need to create car parking, we can introduce drive lines with open land in the middle. Imitation lawns can be replaced with natural lawns. These will both take a little bit more time in maintenance but the overall affect is a far more pleasing sight, and also has the benefit of attractive smells and bringing wildlife into our gardens.

The same applies to commercial properties. Land that is not being used for the building themselves and for ingress and egress and car parking can be turned over to be ecologically friendly. Would you rather look out of your office window onto a bare concrete or tarmac surface or some greenery or flowers? Nobody would say that the plain tarmac/concrete surface would be preferable.

To say that we can actually control the weather would be an overstatement. But we can temper the climate by acting in a responsible manner for the good of the planet and all life on it.

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- Rephrase owner Paul Fraser has spent more than 20 years working in the media for a variety of titles regionally and nationally, including a long stint at The Northern Echo
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## Christmas is just around the corner! Are you using your loft space to the best of its ability?

If not, then Access 4 Lofts is your quick, easy, and affordable solution. Don't take out word for it, see what our clients say...



**Ian Knight** - We first learned about Access 4 Lofts through a local advertising leaflet, and our experience with them exceeded all expectations. From start to finish, their service was exceptional.

**Initial Impressions:** Our journey with Access 4 Lofts began when Simon came to provide us with a quote earlier in the summer. Right from the start, we were impressed by his professionalism and courteous manner. His thorough assessment of the work required, and his insightful recommendations left us with no desire to seek quotes from other companies.

**Flexibility:** Access 4 Lofts was incredibly accommodating when it came to scheduling the work. We mutually agreed on a start date that suited our convenience, which was greatly appreciated.

**Efficiency:** True to their word, the team completed the loft work in just one day. Their efficiency and dedication were remarkable.

**Clean-Up:** Post-completion, the team left our place spotless. They took care of all the tidying up, ensuring that we didn't have to worry about a thing.

**Valuable Suggestions:** Simon went the extra mile by recommending some beneficial amendments to our initial plan. His expertise added significant value to our project.

**Recommendation:** We wholeheartedly endorse Access 4 Lofts for any loft-related work. In fact, we've already recommended them to our neighbour, and they were equally impressed. Access 4 Lofts embodies professionalism, efficiency, and thoroughness. Throughout the entire process, they communicated with us effectively, making the experience truly excellent.

So, if you're looking for a company to supply and fit a new loft hatch, ladder, flooring, insulation, shelving, or lighting, in order to make your loft more usable, Access4Lofts Newcastle and Durham is here to help.

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## New Year, new home...

Plan ahead and make sure 2024 is the year to move into your forever home.

**Once the indulgence of the festive season is over, then it's time to think about those new year's resolutions.**

It could be one of the standards – eat less, move more, cut down on spending – all of the usual vows everyone makes when January 1 dawns and which are usually forgotten by the time February comes round.

There is one resolution however that is definitely worth making and one that, once the ball is rolling, it's something most people would be happy to stick to. 2024 could be the year that you make the decision to find yourself a new home, a fabulous new build in a prime location.

It may be in historic surroundings, close to the sea or village life – it doesn't matter what your preference, all of these options and many more are here in the North East – thanks to Miller Homes.

The leading housebuilder has a whole host of fantastic developments across the region and while the locations may differ, the standard of house building and the care with which they are created is a given.

One of the company's flagship sites is Lambton Park, built on the Lambton estate and which comes with the added bonus of a huge slice of history.





Lambton Park

Not only are the homes sympathetically created to reflect the area but those who live there also get special access to the wonderful countryside on their doorstep.

From a park to a meadow – or Stephenson Meadows to be exactly, Miller Homes' development at Callerton.

Anyone looking for country style living but with easy access to city life can find that combination here, just seven miles away from Newcastle but the perfect place to enjoy village life.

From country to coast – and to Longshore Village near Blyth. The South Newsham development has become even more attractive to anyone needing to commute into Newcastle, thanks to a planned new rail line which should be open next year.

Anyone who finds this area particularly appealing may also want to consider Longridge Farm, an idyllic country retreat close to Bedlington, but again within easy reach of both Blyth and Newcastle.

For those who really like the sea almost on their doorstep then Collingwood Grange at North Shields will tick all the boxes.

A brisk walk from the town centre, this development opens up the whole of North Tyneside – and all of its many attractions – to those who settle there.

The good news is that these are just a handful of Miller Homes' developments in the region, where each site is perfect for anyone who wants everything from a bigger family home to those who may want to downsize.

Aisling Ramshaw, Sales Director at Miller Homes North East, believes that now is the perfect time to start thinking about a move in 2024.

"We know that people will be currently having Christmas on their minds, but one of the best gifts they could give themselves is moving into an amazing new build in the new year," she said.

"We have so many amazing developments across the region that we know that there is something for everyone."

**For further information on all of the developments mentioned above, visit [www.millerhomes.co.uk](http://www.millerhomes.co.uk)**

Home at Longshore Village



Stephenson Meadows





## Triple appointment at MOJA

**PR agency Moja, based in Newcastle, has appointed a trio of new recruits to its team; Aoife Forbes, Ava Hartington and Lottie Steele have all joined the start-up this month.**

They have been recruited to raise the profile of clients, get them known within their industries and further develop Moja's business growth, founded in 2022 by Sophie Milliken MBE

Aoife Forbes has joined as PR Manager and has an extensive background in both in-house and agency roles. She will be developing PR strategies for Moja's ever-expanding client list and informing the future of Moja's own business growth.

Ava Hartington has been appointed as Account Manager. Ava is a graduate of Newcastle University where she studied Journalism, Media and Culture and has a background in marketing and agency experience. She is looking forward to getting to know clients and using her writing skills to elevate their profiles.

Lottie Steele has joined Moja as Podcast and Marketing Executive. Lottie studied Media and Journalism at Northumbria University and has a Masters in Radio, Audio and Podcast Production from the University of Sunderland. Lottie is an award-winning audio producer and is passionate about helping others tell their unique stories.

Moja CEO Sophie Milliken MBE said, "We are absolutely delighted to welcome our hat-trick of new starters. They have all jumped straight into their new roles with huge enthusiasm and skill – I am confident they will help our clients achieve superb visibility, boost their profiles and identify new and exciting opportunities for them all."

## Aubergine stays nimble with new PR win

**Leeds PR agency Aubergine has been appointed on a retained basis to handle the PR for award-winning social enterprise Stay Nimble.**

Stay Nimble helps organisations retain and develop great team members and supports thousands of people in their career.

Aubergine's initial job is to promote the company's new Elevate service – a personalised plugin for businesses who want to support their staff progression but don't have the time or resources to do it themselves.

The team of former journalists, which has experience at the likes of the BBC and Channel 4 News, is working on a series of sector pushes kicking off with hospitality – and they are about to launch a survey of hospitality workers to assess the barriers to career progression in the industry.

It's the third time Aubergine has worked with the CEO of Stay Nimble, Dominic Atkinson. The first time was when Aubergine



was appointed by the successful hospitality tech start-up Flyt in 2018, which was acquired by Just Eat the following year for an estimated £22 million.

Dominic appointed Aubergine to work with him again on the launch of Stay Nimble in 2020 and following the success of this project, he's now decided to put the agency on a retainer to generate a more ongoing PR presence.



## BBC star teams with PR experts to help businesses sparkle under the spotlight

**A leading PR agency has joined forces with a BBC TV star to help businesses "sparkle under the spotlight" – be it in front of a microphone or a camera.**

Darlington-based Harvey & Hugo has teamed up with David Harper, from Bargain Hunt, to launch a unique set of services aimed at businesses looking to break into the increasingly lucrative podcasting and videography market.

Within five years, it is predicted that almost half of all Brits will regularly listen to a podcast while globally, the sector is projected to be worth close to \$100bn by 2028.

Additionally, video podcasting is exploding in popularity in part because ad revenue on the likes of YouTube is ten times higher than platforms like Spotify. A recent survey also revealed most companies using video podcasting felt it led to better connection with their audience.

Harvey & Hugo's Charlotte Nichols hosts the firm's own podcast, PRsonal. She said the new partnership aims to "iron out" all the common stumbling blocks – such as under confidence and technical expertise – that typically deter other businesses from producing their own content.

"Podcasts are the new radio, and an unbelievably effective way of building your own brand and telling the world about your business," said Charlotte, who founded the company 14 years ago.

"Video definitely enhances your podcasts and can also be a great way of getting eyes onto your brand. However, for many people, the thought of appearing on camera or speaking on a microphone is too daunting.

"They are then deterred from creating the content that could help grow their business.

"That's why we have teamed with David and combined decades-worth of experience to help people cast aside their nerves and grow their confidence so they'll sparkle under the spotlight – be it on camera or a microphone."

The partnership, called Harvey & Hugo x Harper, is being run via the PR agency's in-house training brand, Hugoversity.



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## Ex-BBC presenter – Alfie Joey – surprised with honorary award at CIPR North East PRide Awards

Following three years of being exclusively online thanks to Covid 19, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) annual regional awards returned, with the first face-to-face event held here in the North East.

The CIPR's PRide Awards is the UK's leading regional PR awards, and aims to shine a light on leading talent, delivered in vibrant PR

communities across UK regions and nations. On Friday 22nd September, this year's first of nine different regional awards were held at The Common Room in Newcastle, with over 100 people coming together to celebrate their achievements while demonstrating the impact their public relations and communications work has had on business and society.

Hosted by Charlie Charlton, the big surprise of the night was for ex-BBC Newcastle presenter turned artist and public speaker coach, Alfie Joey. Alfie was commissioned to capture the night as it unfolded as part of the event's entertainment team through a series of caricatures. However, unbeknown to Alfie, he was actually there to receive the honorary award of Communicator of the Year – a special award given by members of the CIPR North East Committee to people who have gone above and beyond to promote the region in a positive light, even when public relations is not their day job.

Debbie Sharratt, Chair of CIPR North East, said: "Alfie is one of the most professional, engaging and genuinely kind people you'll ever meet. He has been both a big supporter of these awards over the years, as well as a keen supporter of North East-based organisations, events and issues across the region – championing them and using his platforms to help promote and engage whenever he can. It was an honour to name him Communicator of the Year 2023."

## Different Narrative Awarded Effectiveness Accreditation by IPA

Marketing agency setting benchmark for industry-leading after gaining key accolade

Marketing and advertising agency Different Narrative has been heralded as "industry leading" after being awarded Effectiveness Accreditation by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

The accolade was presented to just 30 agencies from the 16,000 registered across the United Kingdom, with the Newcastle-based agency deemed to be setting the benchmark for the industry. The accreditation seeks to drive an expectation of effectiveness between brand marketers and agencies through a central business culture.

For Different Narrative CEO Kieron Goldsborough, it marks a key milestone in the agency's journey as he seeks to raise the profile of the North East's advertising and marketing arenas.

He said: "For years the North East advertising sector has been evolving and innovating and now our efforts are gathering pace.

"When we see key local organisations continuing to choose London-based agencies over very capable teams from our region, it reminds us there is still work to be done to shine a light on the depth of creative expertise that sits on our doorstep."

And he believes the Effectiveness Accreditation validates the business' commitment to client and employee successes. He said: "Different Narrative is delighted to have joined an elite band of IPA Effectiveness Accredited agencies. This is validation of our efforts across the whole business to create a culture of evidence-based marketing effectiveness. It's absolutely brilliant news. By delivering effectiveness, not only in our client



delivery, but across all our processes, we are providing added value to clients while serving up cost-effective and impactful campaigns."

Each of the submissions had to demonstrate how their culture is dedicated to effectiveness across four key criteria: Focus, People, Process, and Data, Tools & Measurement.

In preparing a comprehensive submission the Different Narrative team identified three key marketing effectiveness principles, which sit at the core of its campaigns – to develop evidence-based business decisions in partnership with clients, implementing a continuous learning loop of test and learn methodologies and making key distinctions and actions between inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Additionally, a key effectiveness roadmap has been developed to enable employees to stay on track with their effectiveness objectives, while an effectiveness training package enables wider effectiveness in client campaigns and internal processes.



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*Sarah Waddington CBE*



# Marketing and Media Matters

*In the latest of this popular series of features we talk to...*

## Sarah Waddington CBE

*Director of Wadds Inc., professional advisers to creative agency management teams.*

**We caught up with Sarah to learn more about her leap from agency boss to agency adviser.**

### **Did you always envisage a career in the media industry?**

Absolutely. A sixth form careers questionnaire suggested public relations (PR) as a possible option for me so I decided to study media relations at Leeds University, hedging my bets by also reading French. By the time I'd done two internships, one at ITV Tyne Tees and the other in a PR agency, I knew I'd found the right career for me.

### **What has been your career path so far?**

After graduating, I immediately took a job in a North East PR firm and was headhunted by various integrated marketing agencies before setting up my own PR, marketing and management consultancy in 2009.

Over time I did a voluntary stint with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), which culminated in my election as President in 2018. I also founded #FuturePROof, a community committed to reasserting public relations as strategic management function and launched Socially Mobile, a training programme to help practitioners learn management competencies.

I closed my business last year to join Wadds Inc., where we support ambitious management teams with company direction. Ultimately, we help creative agencies build value, scale and manage risk. It's the best thing I've done in a long time.

### **What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far?**

I've seen my fair share of sexism in the industry. I actually set up my own agency to circumnavigate the classic glass ceiling. I love that my work now helps other female leaders smash through it.

### **Who do you most respect in your industry?**

Not ashamed to say it's my husband, Stephen. He's one of the brightest minds and most inspiring leaders I know. We met because of our work and his industry foresight and ability to simplify complexity for business and communities alike is a very unique talent.

### **How did you adapt your business during the Coronavirus and support clients?**

Operating as a virtual agency meant there was no change in operations for us. This was a real benefit as it meant that service delivery continued as normal and we were able to advise clients on how to successfully set up remote working, plus maintain company culture.

### **What is your greatest strength?**

An appetite for learning. I've always used my time to develop professionally. From earlier in my career, I have an MA in marketing and a certificate in digital marketing, as well as various other qualifications related to leadership and steering complex projects.

The IoD's qualification in Company Direction has been one of the most beneficial courses I've done most recently. I've been a Chartered PR practitioner since 2017 and earned the title of Chartered director just this September.

### **What is your biggest weakness?**

I don't tolerate fools lightly. Maybe that's actually a strength.

### **What has been your proudest achievement?**

Receiving a CBE for services to public relations and the voluntary sectors. Volunteering was important to me from the very start, sometimes because the cause meant a lot personally, sometimes because it provided a great way to learn new skills and break into new networks. To have been recognised for my work when it was done from the heart is really humbling.

### **What are your future career aspirations?**

I'm really happy with what I'm doing now. Helping agencies build a futureproof, differentiated market proposition that allows them to develop resilience and grow is really rewarding. My main goal for the coming year is to complete my Diploma in Life and Personal Performance Coaching as I love seeing people thrive.

I also plan to keep giving back to the industry. In addition to Wadds Inc., our community interest company Socially Mobile helps those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and under-served groups to increase their earning potential. We've big plans to help even more people through the training so that's a big focus.

### **How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?**

Good governance will never go out of fashion. The focus will be on change drivers – the things that create opportunities and risk for the creative industries. We're currently consulting a lot on ESG, as well as looking at the impact of AI and securing lots of advisory work in this area.

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

There is nothing better than clearing your head on a dog walk or letting off steam in a combat class. A day out with the kids is also the perfect thing for a weekend, although I do love a romantic meal, preferably just for two!

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



## Bonded's Rising Stars: Meet the Young Talent Shaping the Future of the Media Industry

Bonded's very own Sasha Stewart and Harry King have both been nominated for the North East Marketing Awards' *Rising Star* accolade - a testament to their remarkable journeys within such a short time in the media industry.

For digital and media agency, Bonded, staying ahead of the curve is vital to the agency's long term success - and its commitment to nurturing new talent is a key part of this.



**"When I started at Bonded I had no professional experience, but media was something I've always been passionate about."**

Sasha Stewart

### Sasha Stewart

*Media Assistant*

Sasha started her journey at Bonded 15 months ago as a Media Buying & Planning Apprentice. After finishing her apprenticeship with a distinction, she has since been promoted to the full-time role of Media Assistant.

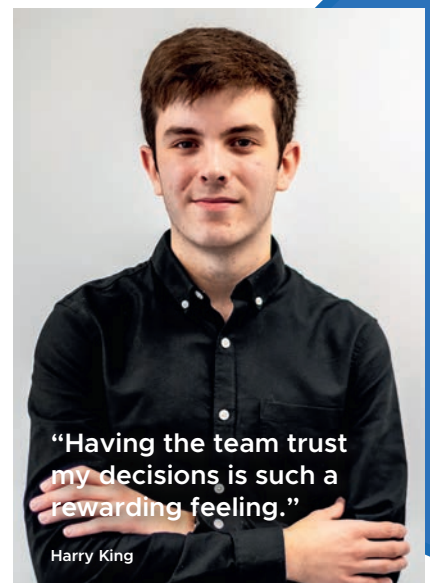
During this time, Sasha has worked with numerous clients on successful campaigns across both paid and organic social, as well as out-of-home media. Her contributions have played a pivotal role in each stage of the campaign process, from research and planning, to implementing and reporting. Under the guidance and mentorship of the team, Sasha has flourished into a well-rounded marketer who is not only a trusted, and well-respected member of the team, but a valuable asset for clients.

### Harry King

*Digital Marketing Apprentice*

Harry is currently working as a Digital Marketing Apprentice at Bonded, alongside studying Digital Marketing at university. Having joined the agency over a year ago, Harry has worked across various marketing channels - particularly flourishing in the realm of paid search.

Working in close collaboration with his line managers, Harry has completed numerous training courses, mastered complex reporting tools and even dedicated a weekly 'Innovation Hour' to exploring emerging trends in the industry. Harry's innovative approach to problem-solving, passion for his client's success, and dedication towards continuous learning make him an indispensable part of the team.



**"Having the team trust my decisions is such a rewarding feeling."**

Harry King

Scan to visit Bonded's LinkedIn page, or for more information visit: [bondedagency.com](https://bondedagency.com)





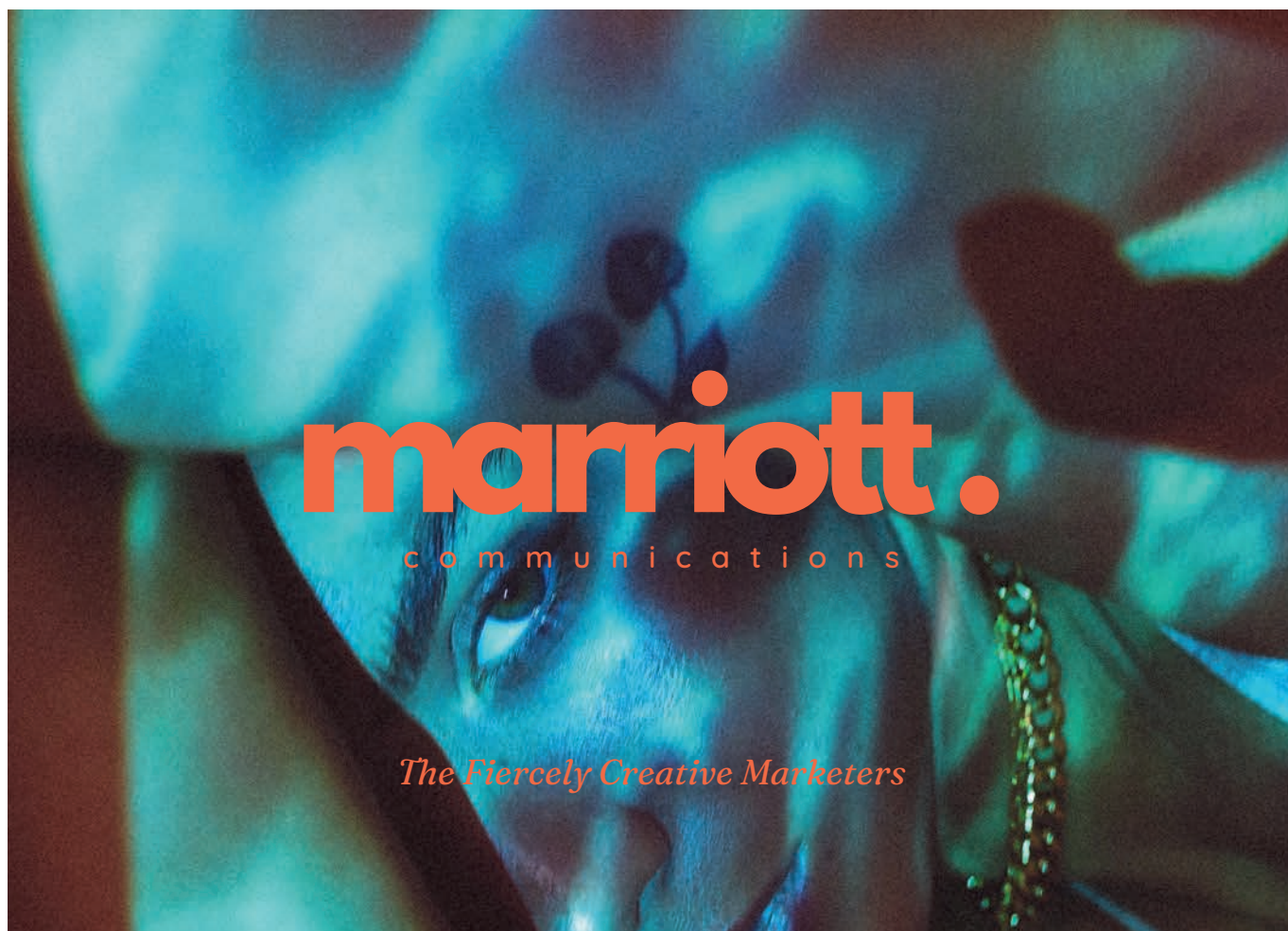


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# ...Only a few weeks to Christmas!...

**Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what they are doing to prepare for Christmas.**



A main focus for Christmas and Leading Link will be the Northumberland Holiday Provision. As the strategic delivery partner for NCC's HAF delivery, we are currently working with providers to deliver a range of enriching activities for children and families across the festive period. Providers from across Northumberland will be running camps and events to support families during the holidays all wrapped up with a food offering too. Working with Q20 events we will be touring a production of the "Justin Credible Supershow" at locations in Northumberland supported by a team of our fantastic Young Leaders who will be looking after front of house and food! This project will have an accompanying activity booklet jam packed with fun things for children to do during their holidays.

*Chris Johnson, [www.leadinglink.co.uk](http://www.leadinglink.co.uk)*



At Plastic & Metal Profiles Limited we are printing a variety of Christmas jobs for both larger and smaller businesses. We happily support the smaller businesses setting up for markets supplying banners, posters, or stickers. Or for those larger businesses we can provide large format solutions for seasonal signage or promotional prints.

Over the Christmas period we have a full factory shut down, for some well-earned rest for all staff, so the coming months will be about ensuring our customers have everything they require. Providing both us and them with a fresh start in the new year.

We may be getting prepared at work but at home the thought of Christmas shopping is too much! However, we are looking forward to the Christmas Parties!

*Rebecca Thompson, [www.pmpnameplates.co.uk](http://www.pmpnameplates.co.uk)*



Winter is always a busy time of year for us, Our mentoring work peaks during the darker winter nights and particularly around the Xmas period due to the extra pressures the festive period creates for families. We have developed a range of innovative and engaging support programmes for adults, families and young people this winter to cope with the ever-increasing demands. We are always on the lookout to grow our offer and are currently looking for more mentors and new partnerships to support our work. If you offer a fun or engaging service our clients would be interested in or want to work with us, just get in touch.

*Paul Kirkpatrick, [paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk](mailto:paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk)*

With Christmas on the horizon, and a full 'to do' list, I'm taking my own advice and paying attention to my mental fitness checklist so I can return refreshed and ready to kick up some dust in 2024.

## **Identify my Top Priorities:**

Prioritising tasks and projects, especially as the holiday season approaches helps me to enjoy the holiday build-up.

I make a list of the most important tasks and projects that need to be completed before the end of the year; the tasks that can't wait until the new year.

## **Be Kind**

I make time to schedule activities that I enjoy over December to top up my wellbeing tank. I say no (or not yet) to things that aren't priority or helpful to you. Being kind to yourself is crucial, especially during busy and potentially stressful times.

## **Relax, connect, and celebrate**

Switching off the mental "apps" of my busy brain, and slowing down the pace of work, reduces potential overwhelm and helps me step back, wind down and to tune into the Christmas holiday that I want to experience, and then turn it into my reality. These proactive steps help me enjoy and adventurous Christmas experience and feel ready for an impactful, effective 2024

*Polly Brennan, [www.adventurouscoaching.com](http://www.adventurouscoaching.com)*







Once again, this year through December, I started volunteering on the Christmas for All project. The end goal is to make sure no child goes without presents on Christmas Day. We have locations across the North East for donations and last year, we helped over 2000 children in the area.

Dan Wilkinson, [www.thedwmedia.co.uk](http://www.thedwmedia.co.uk)



Christmas is a rest time for my lovely French learners - I don't do my French classes over the Christmas period. But before we break, in class we do lots of vocabulary preparation around the yuletide theme. We talk about La Saint-Nicolas, la bûche de Noël (yule log) and the Christmas traditions in France and French speaking countries. In my weekly listening exercises I also plan in lots of cultural information to help my learners get into the Christmas spirit.

Barbara Allen, [www.linguaforme.co.uk](http://www.linguaforme.co.uk)



Now the HUB is fully up and running we're in full promotion mode for our stockists, most of whom are members of MINT Business Club or Celebrate Difference clients.

We've planned our Christmas "decorate the HUB" day and will be having a staff lunch celebration too.

We are so proud to showcase over 70 small, independent businesses in The HUB Consett - buying local and small makes such a difference to the self-employed community. And of course, the products are unique!

Nicola Jayne Little, [www.celebratedifference.co.uk](http://www.celebratedifference.co.uk)

**Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact [keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk) or call Keith on 07814 397951**

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## CIM is for your whole marketing career, not just a term!

I have noticed of late how many of my peers on LinkedIn are FCIM and Chartered Marketers, and we thought we would reach out to our associates and alumni to see what belonging to the CIM community and doing their CIM qualifications has meant to them.

**When you have been a full member of CIM for some time, did you know you can apply to become a Fellow? The application process is very straightforward online. But why would you do this? I know for me; it means I have the highest recognition from the Chartered Institute of Marketing for my marketing capabilities and experience.**

Craig Kirkpatrick, Head of Marketing, Lloyd Motor Group, FCIM, Chartered Marketer, says that working towards Chartered Marketer status and being a Fellow of the CIM has been crucial to his career as it's professional evidence of a sustained period of education, training, work, experience and assessment judged by his peers. Craig also studied for his CIM Diploma in Professional Marketing with nesma.



Having completed the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme, Natalina Sutherland, Senior Brand Marketing Manager, MCIM DipM at Lookers, is looking forward to the CIM graduation ceremony in November and told us that as a direct result of the experience gained completing this Level 7 qualification, she has enhanced her strategic marketing skills and become a valuable strategic member of the senior marketing team. Hence, she has been assigned to lead marketing projects with significant investment to implement operational excellence.



Being a Chartered Marketer is the professional and royal endorsement that you are that 'professional marketer'. So, how difficult is it to become Chartered? You can register for your CPD (Continuing Professional Development) if you hold Associate level membership and above. If you keep this up to date for two years, you can apply to become a Chartered Marketer. People already studying for CIM qualifications can use their studies as evidence for their CPD. So, my tip to you is that if you are studying at the Diploma level and above, now is the time to upgrade to an Associate, if not full, membership of CIM.





Joe Sanders, Marketing Manager at the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, raves about his CIM Diploma in Digital Marketing, saying, "The Diploma was a good way of backing up what I'd learned on the job with theory and standard techniques calculating ROI, targeting and positioning, budgeting, and customer profiling. Through doing the assignments, I

improved my understanding of the business's target markets, digital customer experience, and opportunities. I keep the finished assignments on hand and refer to them often to help generate ideas. I now use many things I learned during the course in my current role - for example, when I'm planning, I use the PR Smith's SOSTAC® framework."

The CIM Certificate and CIM Diploma programmes comprise three modules. They can be extended with bolt-on modules so that it is possible to gain additional Diplomas, for example, the CIM Diploma in Digital Marketing or the CIM Diploma in Sustainable Marketing with just a 3-month add-on module. Although we know it takes commitment and dedication to study on top of busy day jobs, think about your marketability and career goals with your current or future employers.

Emily Brown, Senior Marketing Manager at Sterling Pharma, has done a top-up Diploma and claims: "Studying with CIM and nesma has been invaluable to my career development and growth. It is the best thing I have done for my career, and I'd recommend these qualifications to anyone looking to pursue a marketing role."



David Murray, Co-Founder of Northumbrian Pantry, Handmade Preserves, has found even just the first module of his CIM Professional Certificate programme very fruitful (if you'll forgive the pun!), saying, "Thanks to the CIM Applied Marketing course, my marketing expertise and confidence have really grown, owing not just to the superb syllabus teachings but also to the broader education it offered which was exceptional."



Lewis Hutchinson, Marketing Communications Trainee at Onyx Health, has made clear decisions about his career journey. He has opted for the CIM Foundation Certificate in Marketing and the CIM Certificate in Marketing in favour of doing A levels at college. He explains why this works for him, "My CIM studies helped me massively achieve the goals I set within my early career. It has also enabled me to have exciting conversations I wouldn't have had otherwise."



The CIM offers a range of professionally recognised Marketing, Digital Marketing and Sustainable Marketing qualifications designed to develop your core skills, so make CIM qualifications part of your personal development plan, whether a full qualification, a modular award or quality training, via one of the specialist awards or a nesma masterclass.

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# A unique interview...

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## Sarah Johnson

*Operations Director, Unique Magazines*

### How did you get into operations?

From the outset of my professional journey, I've been inherently drawn to operations. As early as my first job at age 16, I was deeply motivated to optimise processes to achieve efficiency that serves both the business and the customer. I firmly believe that exceptional customer service is the cornerstone of any thriving business. When the foundational aspects are executed correctly, it sets the stage for continued growth and success.

### Who or what inspires you?

My greatest inspiration comes from my father. Throughout my childhood, I watched him tirelessly push boundaries in his career. His relentless dedication not only led to numerous promotions but eventually saw him ascend to the directorship of a company he had joined years prior in a humble capacity as a stock taker. His journey exemplifies the remarkable outcomes hard work can yield. Yet, his audacity shone even brighter when he chose to leave that position to establish his own venture, Unique Magazines.

Six years ago, I was elated when he extended an invitation for me to join his company. Just as he did, I began my tenure at Unique Magazines at the grassroots level, serving as a customer service advisor. Over the years, I've climbed the ranks to become the Operations Director. Throughout this journey, I've been voraciously absorbing knowledge, always inquisitive, constantly seeking better methodologies and challenging the status quo. To me, there is always room for improvement and refinement in operations.

### What advice would you give anyone interested in getting into operations?

Passion and a ceaseless desire for improvement are paramount in operations. Begin by mastering the fundamental aspects; once these are firmly in place, relentlessly pursue enhancements in every other area. Such dedication not only augments the company's financial health but also invigorates your team, leading to superior customer experiences. Always remember, in operations, even the minutest details can have profound impacts. Cultivate a sharp memory and make it a habit to document everything. This meticulous approach will serve you well in the intricate world of operations.

### What's your favourite part of your job?

While I have a deep affinity for all facets of my role, there's an aspect of my daily routine that resonates with me on a personal level, even though it's not strictly tied to my job description. My longstanding love for magazines comes alive every morning when I step into our warehouse. It's a ritual for me: greeting the team and then immersing myself in the latest magazine deliveries. The allure of fresh covers, the tactile sensation of flipping through new pages – it's invigorating.



John and Sarah

### What is your favourite operations story?

During the early days of the Covid pandemic, as the world grappled with uncertainty, our team faced unparalleled challenges. With our staff working remotely and our distribution team on furlough, my father and I took the reins, managing the entire distribution amidst a surge in orders due to lockdown restrictions. While the situation was intense, it gifted me treasured moments working alongside my dad, even as I made the personal sacrifice of distancing from my husband for safety. This period stands as a poignant reminder of adaptability, resilience, and the invaluable bond of family in business.

### What are your favourite magazines?

My affinity for magazines traces back to my childhood, beginning with my fondness for Smash Hits and Top of the Pops. As I matured, my tastes transitioned to the likes of Cosmopolitan and Marie Claire, followed by the allure of gossip magazines like Closer and Heat. Currently, my passion lies in the realm of crochet, making publications like Inside Crochet and Simply Crochet irresistible reads for me. My eclectic magazine preferences underscore my deep-rooted love for them — fortuitously, I find myself in the perfect profession to indulge this passion!

### What does the future hold for Sarah Johnson?

The horizon is promising with several exciting projects underway at Unique Magazines, and I'm eagerly anticipating their realisation. My aspiration is to further elevate the company, establishing it as the foremost choice for magazine enthusiasts. On a personal front, my passion for crocheting has been nurturing a dream of founding a related business. For now, I take joy in gifting my handmade creations, but the future may hold a new entrepreneurial chapter for me in this realm.

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





Sarah Johnson





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# Nigel gives Devine sponsorship at the Cathedral

Nigel Devine, the owner of Orbis Support in North Shields, is proud to announce his sponsorship of the upcoming "Christmas at the Cathedral" concert in Newcastle, which will benefit the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation.

**The "Christmas at the Cathedral" concert has become a beloved annual tradition in Newcastle, known for its enchanting atmosphere and heart-warming performances. This year's event promises to be even more special, thanks to the generous support of Nigel and Orbis Support.**

Nigel Devine's decision to sponsor the concert is deeply personal. He has always had a strong affinity for Sir Bobby Robson, a legendary figure in the world of football and a true icon in Newcastle. Nigel, himself a passionate Newcastle fan and football enthusiast, admired Sir Bobby's dedication to the sport and his tireless efforts to fight cancer.

Nigel shared, "I have always loved Bobby Robson. He was not only a massive figure in Newcastle football but also an inspiration to

many. However, my connection to the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation goes beyond my admiration for him. Several years ago, my younger brother had the privilege of contributing to Bobby Robson's charitable work. Tragically, my brother lost his battle with cancer five years ago. It was a devastating experience for my family."

Nigel continued, "Cancer touches the lives of so many people, and it has affected my family profoundly. Losing my younger brother and watching my mother battle this terrible disease has made me realise the importance of supporting initiatives like the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. When I learned about the 'Christmas

at the Cathedral' concert and its connection to the Foundation, I knew it was something I had to be a part of."

The "Christmas at the Cathedral" concert is known for spreading holiday cheer and bringing the community together during the festive season. Nigel's sponsorship will help make this year's event even more magical, with all proceeds going towards the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation's vital cancer research and support efforts.

"I have attended the 'Christmas at the Cathedral' concert for the past five years and have grown to love the event and the people associated with it," Nigel stated. "The combination of the beautiful cathedral setting, and the holiday spirit makes it truly special. It's a time when people come together to celebrate and give back to those in need. I am honoured to be a part of it and contribute in any way I can."

Orbis Support provides supported living for disabled adults with learning disabilities who wish to live in their own home. Their work supports people to live and be part of their community, playing an active and positive role supported by well trained, well paid, and well supported staff.

**Christmas at the Cathedral is on 14th December. Doors open at 6:30 pm, and the show starts at 7:00 pm. Tickets are available from the Theatre Royal box office on 0191 2327010.**



Nigel Devine

Photo: Nigel Devine (highlightspr)



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at the  
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# The Culture Review

## Let's talk about burnout

By Ivan Hollingsworth,  
founder of Centric Consultants

October saw businesses across the UK mark Mental Health Awareness Day with heartfelt LinkedIn posts, mindfulness talks, and yoga in the boardroom – but amid a burnout epidemic, where should business leaders be focusing their efforts for the other 364 days of the year?

According to Gallup, only 15 percent of the global workforce is engaged at work and a study by University College London found overwork is having a real impact on our physical health too with research showing that those working over 55 hours a week are 33 percent more likely to have a stroke compared to those working 35-40 hours per week. Lots of organisations are sleepwalking towards burnout, and while the pandemic has potentially exacerbated the feeling, burnout is nothing new.

Burnout was first described in the 1970s by psychologist Dr. Christina Maslach as a “state of emotions, stress, physical exhaustion, cynicism, psychological overwhelm, and a decline in professional efficacy that a person exhibits in the presence of workplace stressors” - if any of these characteristics are becoming common in your team or workplace then you have a potential problem that you need to address sooner rather than later. The best way to beat burnout is to prevent it in the first place by creating a thriving team where connection, trust and psychological safety are in abundance. But how?

**1. Create vitality** - to put it simply, give people a sense that what they are doing daily makes a difference.

**2. Growth through learning** - while learning can also give a competitive skills advantage, it also sets in motion a virtuous cycle; people who are developing their abilities are likely to believe in their potential for further growth.

The concept of what it takes to be a good leader has completely changed over the last 30 years. Gone are the days of aggressive



Ivan Hollingsworth

leadership strategies and top-down approaches to performance, to truly create a culture where your people feel valued, leaders need to take on the role of coach, listener, and collaborator. Poor relationships at work are one of the key contributing factors to burnout and by taking this approach you start to build real relationships with your people and avoid transactional conversations that leave your team feeling cold.

The world of business books and culture advice can seem impenetrable and it can be difficult to know where to start, but if you are looking to find out more about how to address burnout, and how to build and sustain a great team, I would highly recommend the following reads this month...

### **The Burnout Epidemic: The Rise of Chronic Stress and How We Can Fix It** by Jennifer Moss

In her thoughtful, and timely book, workplace well-being expert Jennifer Moss discusses the misconceptions around how to solve a problem like burnout, including fascinating new research alongside eye-opening, practical advice. The Burnout Epidemic offers readers insightful and actionable advice that will empower them to help themselves – and their employees – feel healthier and happier at work.

### **The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups** by Daniel Coyle

The Culture Code reveals the secrets of some of the best teams in the world - from Pixar to

Google to US Navy SEALs - explaining the three skills such groups have mastered to generate trust and a willingness to collaborate. Combining cutting-edge science, on-the-ground insight, and practical ideas for action, it offers a roadmap for creating an environment where innovation flourishes, problems get solved, and expectations are exceeded.

Ivan Hollingsworth is the founder and director of Centric Consultants - a business founded in a bid to tackle ‘culture-washing’ and support business leaders to build strong, sustainable, high-performing teams based on trust and psychological safety.

*For more insights on what company culture truly means, and how to implement change across your business follow Centric Consultants on LinkedIn or email Ivan directly at [ivan@centric-consultants.com](mailto:ivan@centric-consultants.com)*





## Children adore learning at ‘Outstanding’ primary school in Seaham

**Children love their primary school and “find every opportunity to share this love with visitors” – and it’s easy to see why.**

St Cuthbert’s Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, has been rated ‘Outstanding’ by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI).

“The commitment and pride shown by all pupils in belonging to the school is a strength; their behaviour is exemplary, and the respect and care shown for all is outstanding,” said CSI lead inspector Elaine White in her report.

“Pupils achieve well in religious education, making very good progress as they journey through the school, leading to excellent outcomes. They are developing into religiously literate young people as is clearly evidenced by their discussions in class. Pupils talk confidently

about their learning, using religious vocabulary accurately.

“Pupils enjoy lessons; they engage fully, and they participate with enthusiasm. They demonstrate a real commitment to learning, and a desire not only to deepen their knowledge and understanding, but also to link their learning with their daily lives.

“Teachers plan lessons that are creative, engaging and which build upon prior learning and achievement. They have high expectations of their pupils and are skilled in checking understanding and addressing any misconceptions quickly and effectively.”

Leadership at the school on Mill Road in Seaham was also highlighted as a strength in the report.

“They are relentless in their drive for St Cuthbert’s to be a beacon of Catholic life and mission and have clear action plans and strategies that continue to drive improvement. Leaders are highly committed to ensuring staff receive high quality training so that the Catholic life and mission of the school is always consistently strong.”

## Cutting edge new university facility will support the region’s future NHS workforce

**Work is now complete on a state-of-the-art science, health, and medical building, which will further enhance the learning experience for students at Teesside University.**

BIOS is a £36.9m building housing laboratories and innovative learning environments for science and clinical subjects and will provide a step change for health provision at Teesside.

BIOS is equipped with first-class facilities for the training of future healthcare and medical professionals and boasts cutting-edge technology and equipment across four floors. This includes digital anatomy facilities, an oral health research laboratory, a replica operating theatre and a fully



immersive simulation suite, enabling students to work in a range of settings, from hospitals to sports arenas.

BIOS is the latest development to be completed as part of Teesside University’s ambitious Campus Masterplan, which has seen £280m invested in recent years to enhance the campus and facilities and provide the very best student and learning experience.



## Entrepreneurial spirit sees Teesside University achieve top marks

**Teesside University’s position as an enterprising university has been recognised nationally with top marks achieved in the majority of categories in a major performance indicator.**

The Knowledge Exchange Framework 2023 (KEF3) saw Teesside University achieve the top result in four out of seven categories, reinforcing the institution’s status as a university that transforms lives and economies.

KEF3 categorised Teesside University as having ‘very high engagement’ - the highest possible result - across ‘research partnerships’, ‘working with business’, ‘continued professional development’ and ‘graduate start-ups and local growth and regeneration’.

The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is a national assessment of the work carried out by Higher Education Institutions with external partners to support the economy and society. KEF is based on a range of metrics across institutional strategies, activities and their impact.

The Knowledge Exchange Framework sees institutions assessed in clusters among comparable providers.

Teesside University was grouped among 33 large universities nationally with excellent research and teaching across a similar broad discipline portfolio, with Teesside scoring above the cluster average for comparable institutions for 6 out of 7 perspectives in KEF3.

These positive results follow Teesside University’s outstanding performance in the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023 – where the University was awarded gold across all areas.

In addition, last month Teesside University was shortlisted for University of the Year in the brand-new Mail University Guide.



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# Innovative North East training scheme goes global

A unique apprenticeship established in the North East to give young people a solid foundation for a career in the built environment has proven so successful it's going global.

**The industry driven PlanBEE programme developed by Ryder and Gateshead College to plug a significant skills and talent gap is expanding to London and Vancouver Canada.**

The award-winning higher apprenticeship was developed in 2016 to encourage young people to join and thrive in the industry. They learn multiple disciplines, working in a variety of roles including architecture, engineering, quantity surveying and construction - all with a strong emphasis on digital skills.

Alongside academic study, the apprentices are employed to learn on the job and rotate across employers including Bowmer + Kirkland, Sir Robert McAlpine, Cundall, Mott MacDonald and Ryder.

Following its initial success in the North East, Manchester City Council joined forces with Ryder Architecture and Gateshead College in 2021 to launch PlanBEE in the city. Since then, the number of apprentices and businesses involved in the programme have increased by 122 percent and the first PlanBEE Manchester apprentices have recently graduated. All of them secured full-time roles with companies including Buro Happold, Eric Wright Construction, Purcell Architects and Ramboll.

Ayman Abdulgabar, who recently started his role as a trainee quantity surveyor with Turner & Townsend after successfully completing PlanBEE in Manchester, said: "What attracted me to PlanBEE was the fact that it provides extensive exposure to the various skills involved in the construction industry.

"All I knew was that I wanted to work in the industry. I would definitely recommend the course. Instead of attending university for a degree in an area that I might not have enjoyed, PlanBEE gave me an insight into the various disciplines so I could understand better what I wanted to do in the future."

Building on the success of the programme, PlanBEE has now expanded to London, in partnership with the London School of Architecture (LSA) and supported by several London boroughs, with the first apprentices starting this September (2023).

In Vancouver, British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) was introduced to PlanBEE by Ryder which has led to the creation of an adapted version of the programme with the new industry led apprenticeship and micro-credential for schools launching in July 2023.

Mark Thompson, managing director at Ryder, said: "It's wonderful that our PlanBEE programme, created right here in North East, has received not only national but international attention. This highlights just how successful it's been in shaping the future workforce for the built environment. It's a very transferable course and we're confident it will prove just as successful in London and Vancouver."

Since 2016, there have been over 500 industry placements and 74 students have graduated, with 97% progressing to permanent jobs within the sector.

Chris Toon, deputy principal at Gateshead College, said: "PlanBEE has been phenomenally successful, attracting attention from UK industry and overseas. The global recognition is great news for the sector and the development of the future workforce.

"The apprenticeship has directly improved talent development in the industry and brought great benefits to employers across the North East and Manchester. We're confident London and Vancouver will experience the same impact.

"We're also pleased that PlanBEE has created opportunity for those from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds increasing diversity and inclusivity in the sector.

"Apprenticeships like PlanBEE are vital to future proofing key industries and equipping workforces with the work ready skills they need to succeed."

***If you're interested in finding out more about being involved in PlanBEE, visit [www.gatesheadcollege.ac.uk/planbee](http://www.gatesheadcollege.ac.uk/planbee)***



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# Kenton School makes investment into student health and wellbeing through free swimming lesson provision

After success last year, Kenton School, a secondary school and sixth form operated by Northern Leaders Trust (NLT), is continuing the provision of free swimming lessons to enrich students' health and wellbeing.



Kenton School



**Last academic year, Kenton School developed 179 new swimmers through the scheme, and is predicting to develop over 150 throughout the 23/24 academic year. The lessons will supplement the physical education curriculum by taking place outside of curriculum time at East End Pool in Byker and Gosforth East Pool.**

Research shows that swimming is the most popular hobby for children to take part in – surpassing football and dance – yet many children leave primary school without knowing how to swim.

The Swimming Teachers Association has found that one in three children cannot swim, and due to the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing impacts from the pandemic, this is expected to increase to as many as six in 10 by 2025.

Kenton School aims to combat this by offering free swimming lessons to all students. Starting with year 7, students will learn to swim 25 metre lengths as well as mastering essential safety skills.

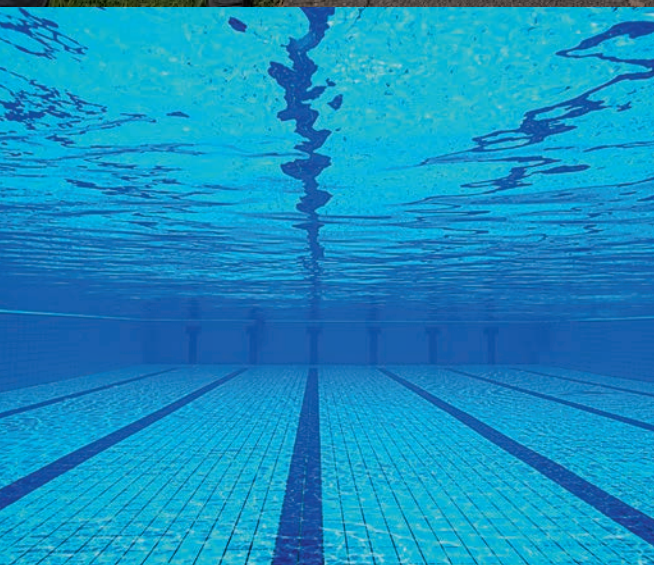
Due to the cost-of-living crisis, not only can the cost of swimming lessons prevent children from learning how to swim, but the cost of the equipment needed to take part in lessons also has an enormous impact. To ensure that any barriers are removed, Kenton School will provide equipment to all students that need it. Students who receive the equipment are then able to keep it to enable them to continue swimming after they have completed the lessons, should they wish. According to NLT's calculations, the cost per student is approximately £70, making the total funding of the scheme around £10,500.

Head of physical education faculty, Chris McCaw said: “We are delighted to be able to offer all students at Kenton School the opportunity to learn how to swim. It has been so rewarding to see our students significantly develop their water confidence and we are proud to be investing in their health and wellbeing.





*Kenton School students (pictured with Chris McCaw, head of physical education faculty,) have enjoyed having the opportunity to take part in the swimming scheme, continuing swimming outside of school and during family holidays.*



“Swimming is a full body workout and has positive impacts on mental health and overall wellbeing. It has been proven to maintain self-esteem and increase confidence, as well as reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms. Additionally, the swimming lessons will teach students how to stay calm and safe in the water, which is imperative.”

Students learn up to front and back crawl, and how to tread water, which is an incredibly important water safety skill. Drowning is one of the most common causes of accidental death in the UK and is the third highest cause of death in children in the UK. Kenton School’s provision of free swimming lessons aims to combat this distressing risk.

CEO of NLT, Lee Kirtley said: “Providing our students with as many opportunities as possible is a huge priority of the trust. Swimming is an enjoyable activity, which has undeniable positive impacts on physical and mental health.”

**For all enquiries, please contact our main reception between 8:30 am - 4:00 pm on 0191 214 2200.**

**Contact us through any of our social networks, or via email: [kenton.admin@northernleaderstrust.org](mailto:kenton.admin@northernleaderstrust.org).**

**Kenton School, Drayton Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE3 3RU.**







# Why essential skills are crucial in supporting local economies

**Andy Barton, Senior Operations Manager at the educational charity NCFE, explains why developing transferrable skills such as critical thinking, confidence and resilience are essential for regions in adapting to changing localised workforce needs.**

**Every region in the UK is facing its own economic challenges and, as the cost-of-living crisis continues, the issues are seemingly becoming even more stark.**

These challenges may be due to one of – or more likely, a mix off – educational attainment, a lack of access to suitable training and learning provision, transport infrastructure challenges, poor social and economic environments, a lack of innovation and investment, and the cost-of-living issue itself.

Even though there are some common sector skills gaps (including digital, green skills, and health and social care) identified through Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), there's one gap that's linked to all sectors – essential skills, also known as 'work-ready skills', 'transferable skills' or 'employability skills.'

## **Why essential skills are key to navigating change**

Employers require individuals who are ready to work with practical and transferable essential life skills, enabling them to learn and adapt to the specific needs of the employer.

Essential skills include communication, problem solving, teamwork, critical thinking, time management, confidence, resilience, and the application of these skills within the workplace. They can also include basic digital skills, such as the use of Microsoft packages.

By having a strong set of essential skills, individuals have attributes that can help them to transfer and transition between sectors and industries. They can help to prepare individuals to strengthen their CVs, as well as to subsequently enter or re-enter the workforce if they have taken time away.

These essential skills are also what can drive a region through periods of change. For example, if there's a downturn due to a key employer or sector moving away, it's important to identify and utilise the transferable skills that individuals have to diversify the employability offer and fill the skills gaps that remain. This also allows people to retain their place as valuable members of their community.

## **LSIPs, essential skills and finding solutions**

At present, there are clear difficulties for employers across all sectors in recruiting the

right people at the right time. This issue is exacerbated due to the lack of clear progression opportunities outside of mainstream educational choices, the population decline in people of working age, and increased economic inactivity.

Adults (individuals who are 19+, but more specifically, those who are 24+) face the biggest challenge because of a confusing and shrinking adult funding landscape. This does not just apply to adults who are out of work, but also those who are in employment and need to upskill to stay abreast of changing technology – as well as those who may be looking to change careers.

At NCFE, we're committed to supporting the plans for addressing local skills needs, ensuring no individual is left behind when it comes to education and training. We're actively involved in the creation of LSIPs, which have been developed to provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind.

By ensuring we can identify and address the essential skills required to tackle specific skills gaps within each of the LSIPs, then we can work together to ensure there's a strong foundation to strengthen the local economy across our regions.

Building a short, medium, and long-term plan so that a sufficient number of people are equipped with the correct skills at the time jobs become available within their area will be key to this.

***To discover more about NCFE's work-based learning qualifications and education products that help individuals to enter or re-enter the workplace, visit the Learning for Work homepage.***

***[www.ncfe.org.uk/learning-for-work](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/learning-for-work)***





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## New College Durham unveils The Copper Pot

New College Durham is thrilled to announce the grand opening of its new restaurant, The Copper Pot, a student-led restaurant that promises a fresh and dynamic approach to culinary education and dining. The ribbon-cutting ceremony, led by His Majesty's Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Kate Welch OBE, recently marked this exciting occasion.

New College Durham has provided a platform for catering and hospitality students to gain real-life work experience through its training restaurant and this year the college made a bold decision to enhance the student experience by creating a modern space with its own external entrance to further bridge the gap between the education and professional worlds, ensuring students gain the skills needed for their future careers while delighting paying customers.

The restaurant's new, contemporary design reflects the college's commitment to providing an authentic and vibrant learning environment. Named "The Copper Pot," this establishment seamlessly blends its modern aesthetic with a nod to traditional cooking utensils, creating an inviting atmosphere for both students and customers. The Copper Pot was successfully completed in September 2023, just in time for the start of the new academic year.

The grand opening of The Copper Pot was celebrated with a drinks and canapés reception, the culinary delights were prepared by the talented students. Additionally, the hospitality students demonstrated their expertise in serving and providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere.



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## Buoyant mood amongst delegates at automotive Expo

Delegates attending North East England's flagship exhibition for the automotive sector, heard how the region has plenty of opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and innovation, as it continues to be a globally significant area for automotive manufacturing and vehicle electrification.

**The North East Automotive Expo, coordinated by industry cluster, the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA), attracted over 700 visitors and 110 exhibitors, at the Beacon of Light, Sunderland at the end of September.**

Delegates at the Expo heard from two headline speakers, Michael Jude, HR director, Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK and Dr Henry Kippin, chief executive, North of Tyne Combined Authority and interim chief executive, North East Mayoral Combined Authority, who both spoke about regional strengths and future plans.

NEAA chief executive, Paul Butler, said: "The timing of this year's Expo was well aligned to the announcement from Nissan on its EV mission to supply an all-electric line-up in Europe by 2030. The North East as a region, and the supply chain based here, are perfectly placed to provide the support structure to assist Nissan achieve these EV objectives."

A Skills for the Future panel was chaired by Professor Matt Boyle OBE, chairman at the NEAA and chair of Driving the Electric Revolution Innovation Centre (DER-IC) Project. Panellists were Dr Henry Kippin, Michael Jude, Ellen

Thinnesen, chief executive of Education Partnership North East, Howard Slater, director of engineering at Curtis Instruments, Inc. Alison Maynard, deputy principal at New College Durham and strategic lead for the North East Institute of Technology (NEIoT), Neil Willis, regional lead Education Challenge at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Bob Blenkinsop, director at Infinitive Perspective Consulting and Mark David, skills project manager at the North East Automotive Alliance.

Paul Butler added: "Having the opportunity to highlight the skills needs of our sector and what we are doing to support these was of importance at the Expo this year, particularly following the publication of the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan.

"Another key focus of the Expo is the Technology Showcase which continues to grow year on year, with companies demonstrating some of the innovative technology being designed and developed in the region to support the evolution of the automotive sector. This element of the Expo attracted interest during the day not just from those already operating within the sector but a wide range of academics. Companies

taking part included Expo sponsors and a wide range of robotics experts."

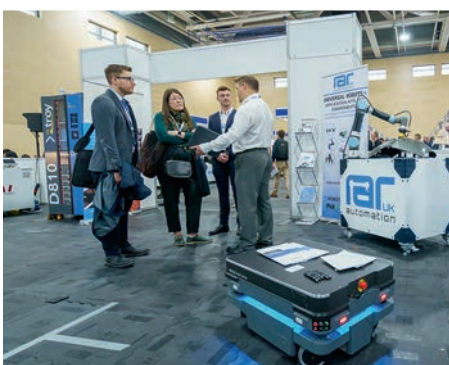
Meet the Buyer, which facilitates over 100 one-to-one meetings each year, along with numerous successful supply chain opportunities and awarded projects, returned with support from OEMs including Nissan and Komatsu, and tier one suppliers Nifco UK, Unipres (UK), AESC UK, Marelli, Faltec Europe, Elring Klinger (GB) and Highly Marelli UK. The NEAA has received direct feedback from those taking part and many have confirmed they have been invited for further discussions with interested buyers.

The main sponsor was Sunderland City Council, with strong support provided by Invest South Tyneside, Theorem Solutions, TR Fastenings, North East Growth Hub, Masfix, Ekobox, Manosun, Horizon Works, Think Prime, SMS Technology, Smart Manufacturing Solutions, CMYK and SOS Industrial.

A date has been set for the 2024 event on Thursday 26 September, taking place at the Beacon of Light for a fifth year.

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









## Celebrating the Beauty of the North East: Alexander Millar's 'A Sense of Place' Exhibition

Contemporary impressionist artist Alexander Millar recently held a new exhibition at his gallery in Newcastle's Grey Street which showcased his deep appreciation for the North East of England, a region he has called home for 44 years.

The exhibition, 'A Sense of Place', featured a collection of paintings that pay tribute to the picturesque landscapes and iconic scenes that have captured his heart and imagination over the years.

Each painting in the exhibition contains his trademark 'Gadgie' and is a heartfelt tribute to the places that have left an indelible mark on his soul, drawing from his cherished memories.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is the painting 'Where Angels Tread', which depicts a stunning view of the iconic streets in the city's West End looking down to the River

Tyne with the long-gone chimneys of Stella Power Station in the background. Millar has masterfully captured the play of light and atmosphere in this timeless scene, showcasing it in both paper and canvas formats.

Another notable piece is inspired by a famous photograph of two individuals perched on a fence overlooking the Tyne Bridge at sunset, aptly titled 'Tyne Bridge Sunset'. This work captures the beauty of the iconic bridge and the serenity of the moment. Moving towards the coast, other paintings include a study of Cullercoats and the imposing beauty of the Wallsend shipyards.

The exhibition also includes other captivating paintings, such as 'Colourful Quays' and 'Tyne Bar', both of which encapsulate the charm and character of the North East, offering viewers a chance to reconnect with their own cherished memories of the region.



## Drag Race winner The Vivienne to star in The Wizard of Oz at Newcastle Theatre Royal

RuPaul's Drag Race UK winner and Dancing on Ice finalist, The Vivienne will play The Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz when it visits Newcastle Theatre Royal Tue 16 – Sun 21 Apr 2024.

The Vivienne is without doubt the UK's No.1 drag superstar, after emerging as the original champion of the first season of RuPaul's Drag Race UK. Since then, she has become a huge star both in the UK and internationally, appearing on TV regularly and releasing music for fans across the globe. 2023 saw The Vivienne make history as the first drag star to appear on a major UK reality competition series, competing in Dancing On Ice on ITV.

The Vivienne said: "It is quite literally a dream come true to be asked to play The Wicked Witch of the West and to bring this amazing character to life. The Wizard of Oz means everything to me, it's the ultimate story of overcoming adversity. I first saw the movie aged five and I've probably seen it about 100 times since. I played The Tin Man at primary school and got to skate to Over The Rainbow on Dancing on Ice so it's fair to say I've had a life-long love affair with the story. Your favourite characters are all there, telling the story you know and love ... but with so much more added to this new production. Prepare to be whisked into an amazing new world of colour."

## Six is coming to Sunderland

The multi award-winning musical SIX, written by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss, has announced new tour dates and will visit Sunderland Empire for the first time from Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 July 2024.

SIX follows the six wives of Henry VIII as they take to the mic to tell their own personal tales, remixing five hundred years of historical heartbreak into an 80-minute celebration of 21st century girl power.

Casting will be announced in due course. The cast are backed by the show's all-female band, The Ladies in Waiting.

Since it's early days as a student production in a 100-seat room at the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the show has fast become a global musical phenomenon. On the international



stage, SIX currently has productions playing on Broadway at the Lena Horne Theatre and two concurrent North American tours, including a seven-week run in Las Vegas, with further stagings announced in Canada and Holland this Autumn. SIX opens in Seoul, South Korea on 17 March and recently completed an Australian tour. Back on home turf, the London production continues its reign in the West End at the Vaudeville Theatre (its third royal residence) and the UK and Ireland tour continues to break Box Office records. The UK tour is now booking through to 2024.

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# Culture Club

## John Milton Peacock

Owner, *Alfie & Fin's Bar* in Tynemouth's iconic *Land of Green Ginger*.

When he's not promoting gigs in his own bar, he also organises other events such as the emerging music festival *Coast Fest*. Here John tells us about his taste in music, art and culture.

### Who is your favourite author and why?

I'm not much of a reader and she's not an author as such, but I always remember the anthology book we studied for our GCSEs with a poet called Carol Ann Duffy. One particularly stood out called 'Valentine', which is about an onion of all things. It's pretty deep.

### What would be your three Desert Island Discs?

Being around so much great music growing up this is a difficult one. There has to be an *Oasis* record in there, I'm pretty fond of *Be Here Now*. I went on the bus up to town for the first time to buy that one with my mate Cliff I think. Those were the days. I love 'Down In Albion' by Babyshambles, it's 16 songs long (probably four too long) but it's an absolute masterpiece. I'd also have the Red Beatles number 1's album as well, just because it's the Beatles. Unbelievable.

### Who is your favourite film star and why?

Anyone who knows me will know that my favourite actor of all time is Macaulay Culkin. It's a borderline obsession. Those two *Home Alone* films as a kid were just the best. Everybody wanted to be Kevin, including me.

### What are your top three films?

I have to say 'Home Alone 1 & 2', I love them in equal measures. I also really enjoyed the 'Eddie the Eagle' film and a film that stars John Favreau called 'Chef'. It's absolutely class. I guess I love an underdog story. It feels like my music festival, 'Coast Fest', is the underdog at times but I kind of like it that way.

### Which poem left a lasting impression on you?

Aside from 'Valentine' that I mentioned above, I used to love a poem called 'If' by Rudyard Kipling. They played it in the BBC at the end of the France World Cup back in '98 and it gave me goosebumps. You can still find it on YouTube actually and I still watch it from time to time when I need a boost or things aren't going so well. Back then my dad told me that it was the guy who made the cakes and I believed him for a very long time, pretty much until Google was invented.



John Milton Peacock

### What box sets have you enjoyed?

Box sets...there are so many...for work at my venue, *Alfie & Fin's*, we do a lot of themed quizzes, we like to write our own and my partner insists that we watch every episode of every chosen theme. The latest one was a 'Friends' quiz. It's a classic and everyone has seen it 1000 times but every time you watch you find something new that is hilarious. We've recently done a 'Sex in the City' and a 'Ru-Paul's Drag Race' quiz. They wouldn't usually be my typical choice of box set but I actually got quite into them.

### Who is your favourite artist or performer?

It's got to be *Oasis*, I grew up on them and was lucky enough to see them live on a number of occasions. Unbelievable memories. The kind that shape you, you know?

### What is your favourite venue?

Aside from my own, *Alfie & Fin's* (shameless plug) I would have to say the Cluny in Ouseburn. It was where it all started for me being a concert promoter. I put my first run of notable shows on there back in 2005 with *The Cribbs*, *Longblondes*, *Kubichek*. It was a great time for new bands then. I used to read the NME at work on a Friday in the call centre and book bands from my BT email

address. I got fired from that job. I didn't do a lot of work for them. It really gave me the promoting bug and I'm still doing it after all this time.

### Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?

It's got to be guitar. I mean I can play it with a small amount of success but never good enough to play in a band or anything. I did try, and I was very quickly handed a bass and told 'press this'. I did alright though, we toured about a bit and had some great times.

### From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

I could literally go on forever with this but if I had to choose one it would have to be Glastonbury Festival founder, Michael Eavis. I'd love to pick his brains and listen to his festival stories. Actually, he could bring his daughter Emily along as well. She seems like an interesting lady and I bet she's got some great stories too. Maybe I can blag a guesty off them. I went to the festival once in 2008 and I've not been successful since.

To find out more about *Coast Fest 2024* or to donate to help the festival  
[www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/coast-fest-2024](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/coast-fest-2024)





## This artists life

By Mary Ann Rogers

**This is the time of year when two very important events in the life of this artist collide. Autumn, with its drama, changing colours, stunning light, tension and sense of transition...and Christmas.**

**Time spent away from the drawing board at this time of year makes me very anxious, as these moments when the hills surrounding my home come so brilliantly to life are fleeting, and it is imperative to get paint onto paper and somehow 'describe' what is essentially a visceral response, using the limited skills I have.**

Meanwhile, every day Christmas gets closer. Christmas is a very important time in terms of interest in my work, increased visitor numbers, online sales and the handful of Christmas shows and fairs we undertake, which require an

immense amount of planning and preparation, plus physically gathering everything together, ticking off items on the long checklist, loading up, building a stand which hopefully attracts people to investigate further and hopefully buy something.

Our 2024 print and gift catalogue is now designed, proofed and being printed ready to mail out shortly, along with invitations to our special Christmas open weekends, this has been an intensive design period, and we very much hope it will lead to a super busy pre-Christmas!

It is so important to take time to appreciate the beauty of this time of year - the geese flying overhead, the stock in the surrounding fields changing- this year's lambs heading off to mart to be sold, cattle shortly heading into the shelter of big barns and the excitement of the tups (rams) being put out into the fields full of ewes for the next crop of lambs.

This is the time of year when the regular river swims take on a very different feel, as the temperatures plummet, swims get shorter, and the wildlife changes. Returning salmon are a regular sight, along with the likelihood of spotting otters, who have been strangely elusive all summer. Now that the thigh high riverbank plants have been frosted and flattened by recent flooding, we can access more of the river and will be putting the nature camera out soon-exciting times ahead!

[www.marogers.com](http://www.marogers.com)



## Christmas at Mary Ann Rogers Gallery

Fri 24, Sat 25, Sun 26 Nov also Sat 2, Sun 3 & Sat 9 & Sun 10 Dec, 10am-5pm.

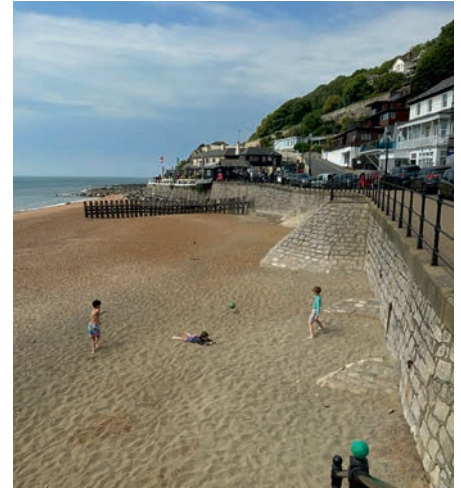
Complimentary mulled wine and mince pies, also bran tub for the kids!

New paintings, prints, cards and beautiful gifts also guests including Linden Craven silver jewellery, Phil's Firepits and Northumbrian Wreaths.

West Woodburn, Hexham NE48 2SE (clearly signed from the village)



# Places to go...Ventnor, Isle of Wight



The Isle of Wight is known as *The Holiday Isle*. It's bigger than you might think at around 24 miles wide and twelve miles from North to South, the largest in England. The southernmost town is Ventnor, nestled under the highest point of the island on St. Boniface Down. The railway reached here in 1866, with a tunnel through the hillside and terminating on a ledge above the town at 294 feet above sea level. So it was never the most accessible of stations, even when joined by a second line into Ventnor West which operated from 1900 to 1952.

The line was cut back to Shanklin in 1966, and it still runs from there to Ryde Pier Head, where the catamaran arrives over the Solent from Portsmouth Harbour station, terminating point for trains from London Waterloo. There is also an alternative route to Ryde from Southsea using the highly unusual Hovercraft service between Ryde Esplanade and Southsea. I arrived on the catamaran at the Pier Head, and spent some time in Ryde before going to my hotel at Seaview.

The Isle of Wight has resorts that have been popular holiday destinations since Victorian times, known for its mild climate, coastal scenery, and verdant landscape of fields, downland and chines.

I have never explored the east side of the island, and stayed at Seaview during a sailing competition which I was supporting. However, I skived off for a few hours on the bus to Ventnor and to take a ride back on the Isle of Wight railway, an electric railway which until recently was run by 1938 tube stock but is now run with former District Line stock also from London.

Ventnor is steep with many zig zag roads, one named Zig Zag Road. Once on the promenade there is a pleasant sandy beach, and a children's paddling pool dominated by a big map of the IoW. I always remember that, as an eight-year-old, the contoured map had to be walked over with care since it was often slippery, but now it has more of a safer matt surface. At the north end of the promenade is one of my favourite pubs: the nautically themed Spyglass Inn which serves seafood and a large array of pub specials.

The management know they have an incredibly attractive pub, and this is duly reflected in the prices, but with splendid views over the beach and sea and some excellent real ales to accompany the food, it doesn't seem a rip-off. The biggest decision is whether to sit inside or outside when the weather is fine.

Ventnor is small, only a population of 5,800. But it does have a thriving

arts scene. If staying on the island for a few days, Ryde or Sandown may be a better bet for somewhere to stay if relying on public transport, which avoids the problem of parking when moving around the island, and the cost of the ferries which know they have a captive market. Both these resorts are on the single Island Line.

St John's Road station, where the depot is, is close to the Isle of Wight bus and Coach Museum, housed in an old Southern Vectis bus garage, with loads of green vehicles interspersed with several examples of coaches that ran excursions for tourists attracted by painted chalkboards outside their various offices. These excursions have now disappeared but the efficient and reliable, and cheap services enable easy travel around the Island. As elsewhere in England, the £2 maximum fare applies, thanks to the recent Prime Ministerial announcement, to the end of 2024.

[alexnelson@nationalrail.com](mailto:alexnelson@nationalrail.com), [www.nationalrail.com](http://www.nationalrail.com)

For a copy of the UK rail map, extract below, visit [www.railmap.org.uk](http://www.railmap.org.uk)

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## Local Italian restaurant training new chef talent

Heaton's PUNTO Italian Kitchen recently announced it has been recognised by Tripadvisor as a 2023 'Traveler's Choice' award winner for dining establishments.

"Heaton Road has gained the reputation as 'the' go-to destination for great food and drink in the North East. We have an excellent local butcher, Block & Bottle, and two new bars, House Bar and Flight Bar. On top of this, two of the top five restaurants in our city on Tripadvisor, PUNTO Italian Kitchen & Boquerones, are

only one block apart on Heaton Road. We're proud to be part of a community of food excellence," said Damiano Rea – Director & Co-Founder of PUNTO Italian Kitchen.

Building on the recent success, PUNTO's directors, the Rea brothers, have decided now is the perfect time to work with Newcastle College, recruiting an apprentice commis chef. The new recruit, Amy, joins the team this week eager to kickstart her career in catering and hospitality.

"A college education is becoming a rarity in the hospitality industry with many chefs learning 'on the job' in corporate kitchens, where broad knowledge and creativity aren't always highly valued. We make all of our finished products in house, from scratch with fresh ingredients, including handmade pasta, sourdough pizza and even our own desserts, gelato and sorbets. We're a family-owned business that value creativity and encourage our team to broaden their skill set.

Working with Newcastle College is a great way to bring in fresh talent and share our skills with the backup and grounding of an excellent well-established course," said Zeno Meynell-Rea – Operations Director & Co-Founder of PUNTO Italian Kitchen.



## Ramside staff clock up more than 800 years of service

Long standing staff at Ramside Estates were rewarded for their loyalty recently at a special thank you celebration.

More than 75 members of the hospitality company's team – which includes those working at Ramside Hall Hotel, Golf and Spa, Hardwick Hall, Bowburn Hall Hotel and for Ramside Event Catering – were invited to the long service awards held at Ramside.

Many of those present had clocked up more than ten years working for the company, while 11 people had been with Ramside Estates for more than 25 years. And the event was also attended by two extra special members of staff – who between them have worked for the company for more than a century.

Joao Tero Nimo Martins – better known to everyone as Martin – was employed by the previous owner, the late Mr Adamson Snr, firstly at a pub the family owned in Whitley Bay before moving him to Hardwick Hall as a waiter.

He worked his way up to restaurant manager but also helped out in many other areas of the business and although he now works part time, he has been with the company for an astonishing 53 years.

John Adamson, the current owner of Ramside Estates, said that it was time to recognise the staff that have been with the company for such a long time. "It's amazing to think that between them, these staff have worked for Ramside Estates for more than 800 years," he said.

"We are so grateful for all of their dedication and devotion and the fact that they have stayed with us for so long, particularly in an industry where people do move around a great deal."

## Flying into the festive season at The Blackbird

A popular Ponteland pub has proved to be an early bird, by unveiling a Christmas menu full of festive favourites.

The Blackbird, at Ponteland, will be serving its special menu from Wednesday 29 November until Saturday 23 December.

And its festive tipi and historic Minstrel Gallery are also available for parties in the run up to Christmas.

The menu's starters include winter vegetable broth, whipped chicken parfait with orchard fruit chutney, smoked haddock kedgerree croquette with curried mayonnaise and

beetroot carpaccio with goat's cheese mousse.

Roast turkey leads the selection of main courses, served with apricot and bacon stuffing, honey-glazed vegetables, pigs in blankets and roast potatoes, while other options include a wild mushroom and potato pithivier, pan-fried sea bream, 12-hour braised featherblade of beef and confit pork.

Dessert choices include traditional Christmas pudding, dark chocolate delice with blackberry ice cream, Christmas rum parfait and passionfruit cheesecake, with vegetarian option available throughout.

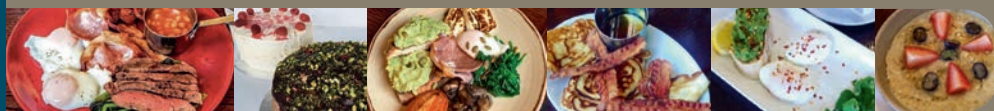
The Blackbird's unique Minstrel Gallery is also available in the run up to Christmas for private dining and parties, while larger parties can opt



for the venue's tipi, decked out with fairy lights and firepits.

The venue will be open every day except Christmas Day, serving its regular menu only on Christmas Eve from 12-8pm.

*"To eat well in England, you should have breakfast three times a day."* Somerset Maugham



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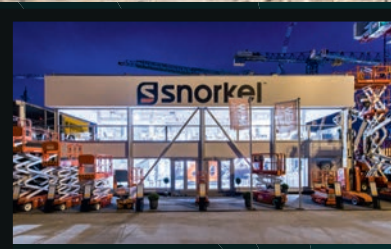




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## Fit for a King

Review by Jackie Marston

Although we live at the coast, we still love to go and see the coastline in other parts of the North East, so was delighted when we were asked to review The Kings Flat in Tynemouth.

It was a Wednesday night, so hubby and I packed the car and headed over there after work. This is an Airbnb and definitely one of the better ones we've stayed at, and having just stayed in one in Worksop that was like something out of the 1970's, we appreciated the modern furniture, fixtures, and fittings. It has some really homely touches, was spotlessly clean throughout and I can see why people ask to stay here again and again.

The owner told me that when filming Vera in

the region, that the producers rent the place for a couple of months at a time, as they love the home from home feel it gives off.

You can park right outside the flat, with their permit, so that saved the hassle of trying to park in Tynemouth, which is often a nightmare. Once inside, there is a cozy sitting room, a double bedroom and a single one, a fully equipped, modern kitchen and it even had an air-fryer, so was very up to date with the latest trends!

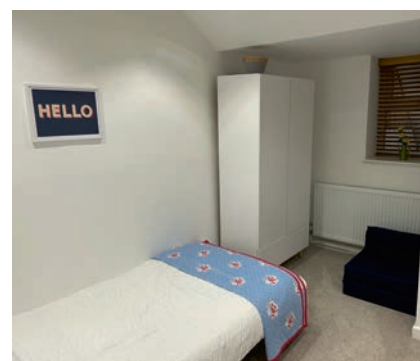
It was too cold to take advantage of the lovely seating area outside, but I could imagine that in the summer, it would be a real suntrap.

I would love to go back there in the summer and have a proper mooch around Tynemouth, as we simply didn't have the time on this visit, but we'd definitely go back. As far as value for money goes, it's up there with some of the best.

The flat is priced from £100 per night and can be booked by calling Rouven on 07980 584 534.

If you're looking for a home from home, value for money accommodation in Tynemouth, then you can't go far wrong with this place.

**The Kings Flat – Tynemouth**  
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## Why Zeera?

Zeera stands as a cherished, family-operated enterprise, under the ownership and management of the Choudhury family, known locally as *the beloved trio*.

Zeera enjoys a loyal following, drawing patrons from South Shields and across the broader North East. It first opened its doors in 2007, Zeera encountered a surge in clients in 2012, prompting the acquisition of the adjacent business space, which, after renovation, allowed the once 42-seat restaurant to comfortably accommodate up to 90 diners concurrently. Zeera consistently hosts a diverse array of celebrations, including birthdays, anniversaries, and other memorable events.

At the forefront of Zeera is Shah Choudhury, hailed as the Entrepreneur of the Year in the Bangla Achievement Awards. He, alongside his brothers Kohinoor (the executive chef) and Abadur (second chef), collectively infuse the restaurant with creativity, meticulous attention to detail, exceptional service, and an unwavering passion for their craft. The Zeera team, comprising 15 dedicated individuals, steadfastly upholds and elevates the standards of fine dining. Zeera's menu remains ever evolving, ensuring that patrons are consistently treated to the latest culinary creations by their talented chefs.





The support that their loyal clientele shows them does not go unrewarded though, as they constantly give back.

Shah tells us: "We initiated a campaign to raise funds for assisting people who were stranded during the Covid-19 pandemic. We provided contactless meal deliveries during this time. We also supported frontline healthcare workers from the NHS by supplying nutritious meals to the local hospital for a full three months, enabling them to perform their exceptional duties during the peak of the lockdown.

"In the wake of the devastating floods in Bangladesh in June 2022, which brought countless challenges to the country, we again extended a helping hand. We hosted a charity event to support families affected by the floods, drawing from our successful experience with a fundraiser for the Ukrainian invasion crisis. The restaurant was able to direct the raised funds to Bangladeshi families and committed to providing ongoing financial assistance."

Over the past two years, Zeera has established the 'Zeera Fund,' a charitable endeavour aimed at aiding members of the community who are struggling to make ends meet and could benefit from some support. Their work in the community hasn't gone unrecognised either and Shah and the team received a congratulatory letter from Emma Lewell-Buck MP – The Member of Parliament for South Shields.



They also achieved the 'Best Team of the Year' award at the English Curry Awards in 2021, a significant accomplishment for the restaurant after a challenging year in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

Zeera's distinctiveness is unrivalled, consistently earning acclaim from food critics and industry award judges who unanimously recognise its exceptional and extraordinary standing in the world of dining.

Their awards in the recent years have included: Prestige Award for Indian Restaurant of the year South Shields, Travellers Choice 2023, Peoples Choice Award 2015, English Curry Award 2023 and British Curry Award.

**If you want to see what all the fuss is about for yourselves, then you can contact Zeera in the following ways:**

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**Instagram -** [www.instagram.com/zeera.southshields/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/zeera.southshields/?hl=en)

**Twitter -** [twitter.com/zeeracuisine?lang=en](https://twitter.com/zeeracuisine?lang=en)

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**206 - 210 Ocean, South Shields, NE33 2JQ • 0191 456 1811**

**[bookings.zeera@gmail.com](mailto:bookings.zeera@gmail.com) • [info.zeera@gmail.com](mailto:info.zeera@gmail.com)**

### **Festive Bookings:**

**Bookings for the festive season are now being taken, but hurry, as they are selling fast, and we'd hate for you to be disappointed!**

### **Opening Times:**

**Sun - Thurs 5.30pm - 11pm • Fri & Sat 5.30pm - midnight**



# Christmas Magic at Sanderson Arcade: A glimpse into the festive extravaganza of November and December



As the leaves start to fall, and the air becomes crisper, the anticipation for the most magical time of year is building up at Sanderson Arcade.

**This iconic shopping destination in the heart of Morpeth, Northumberland, is gearing up to spread the yuletide cheer. November and December are set to be brimming with enchanting experiences, exceptional shopping, and unforgettable festivities.**

## A Multitude of Festive Events

From Caroloke to Santa to exclusive shopping experiences, Sanderson Arcade has a packed diary of festive activities and events planned throughout November and December. Keep an eye out on our website for further updates!

**A Shopper's Paradise:** Sanderson Arcade is known for its wide array of shops, from high-street favourites to boutique brands, and the Christmas season is no exception. The stores will be brimming with fantastic gift options, from the latest fashion trends to exquisite homeware and much more. The friendly and welcoming atmosphere will make Christmas shopping a breeze. Retailers include M&S, Next, Waterstones, Phase Eight, Mint Velvet and much more.

## A Visit from Santa, Saturday 3rd December:

The little ones can look forward to meeting the man in red himself. Santa Claus will be situated in the centre's boutique department store Sandersons this December. Kids will be able to share their Christmas wishes and receive a special treat.

**Gourmet Delights:** Christmas is synonymous with indulging in delectable treats, and Sanderson Arcade will not disappoint. The various cafes and eateries offer a wide range of festive delights, from traditional mince pies and hot chocolates to exquisite dining experiences. Christmas bookings are open now for Barluga and our newest eatery, Martino Lounge.

Join the celebration, make a date, bring your family and friends, and immerse yourself in the heartwarming spirit of the Christmas season. Sanderson Arcade is your destination for creating cherished memories and finding the perfect gifts for your loved ones. Christmas is coming, and it's time to celebrate at Sanderson Arcade!

**Sanderson Arcade is open seven days per week with onsite parking at Stanley Terrace, three hours FREE with parking disc (Monday – Saturday) and all-day Sunday.**

**For more information on Sanderson Arcade opening times, festive events and activities head to our website, [www.sandersonarcade.co.uk](http://www.sandersonarcade.co.uk)**





# Welcome to our world

Four amazing venues in Durham



With the acquisition of Whitechurch, the brand new opening of Tango, the outstanding refurbishment of The Rabbit Hole and the original and best pan Thai-Asian dining sanctuary, Zen coming up to it's 18th year of service, it really is exciting times for Zen Group and diners in Durham.

**TANGO**

SOCIAL BAR & KITCHEN



THE RABBIT HOLE  
CANTONESE-FUSION DINING

WHITECHURCH  
DURHAM





# Zen Group focus on expansion

Durham based hospitality firm serving-up success.



Sam Gadd and Zak Newton

**If you go to Durham City and fancy a bite to eat, there's a very strong chance that you'll be enjoying a sandwich, burger or some seriously fine Asian fusion dining at one of the Zen Group's restaurants, bistros or coffee shops.**

You can choose from the Rabbit Hole and Zen restaurants. Tango burger and steakhouse and Whitechurch bistro.

They're all very different and really do offer something for everyone.

Leading from the front are co-owners Sam Gadd and Zak Newton.

They're a perfect team. Sam is the ideas man while Zak makes those ideas come to fruition.

Sam is also a terrific chef, which comes as no real surprise because he has the hospitality industry in his blood.

"Both of my parents, Nigel and Deborah, have a long history of opening restaurants and bars and apparently it became commonplace for me to be sat as an infant in the corner of a kitchen while everyone worked around me," said Sam. "They had terrific success with the Seven Stars Inn and the Pump House in Shincliffe, and then concentrated on the Zen pan-Asian restaurant in the centre of Durham. They also opened the Gadds Townhouse hotel.

Since then, they've decided to focus their attention on other ventures so Zak and I felt the time was right to take over and grow the business to the next level.

I've worked in all of the restaurants but it was eleven years ago when I opened my own business...Tango...a burger and steakhouse on Elvet Bridge in Durham. That gave me my first real taste of what it was like to not only be part of a business as the manager and chef, but also learn how to run a business...the good bits and the not so good bits.







We've always believed that taking care of customers and staff has to be the main focus. Yes the food, surroundings and service need to be top-notch, but if you don't have contented customers and don't look after your staff, you're going to struggle. We also encourage our staff to use their personalities, and if they have a good idea we do our best to make it happen."

Sam and Zak have already got plans for the future. They're a forward-thinking pair of entrepreneurs who can spot a business opportunity.

Their two latest ventures are the acquisition of the Whitechurch bistro (a lot of readers will remember when it was the New Inn) and relocation of Tango. Whitechurch will continue as a daytime bistro serving brunch until 4-ish, but will also offer a 'grab and go' service, no doubt aimed at the Durham University students and staff. Paninis and wraps will join the bistro offer and they will continue to serve the famous Sunday lunch.

Tango burger and steakhouse will be moving from Elvet Bridge to a much larger premises on Sadler Street.

"Tango has been hugely successful for us," adds Sam. "The only problem was its size. Inside we could have around 30 covers while outside, in the fine weather, we could add a further 60. However, the £350,000 redevelopment of the old Bill's restaurant means we will have 90 indoors."

But really, this is the start of the future for Sam, Zak and the Zen Group. They have ambitious plans.

"We're going to expand the Zen pan-Asian dining experience to other cities. We've already earmarked property in Edinburgh, Newcastle and York. We're also looking at a Zen-to-go operation which offers customers the chance to grab something and take it back to wherever they work, or have it delivered to their home.

We've just refurbished and extended The Rabbit Hole on Hallgarth Street -the revamp means we now offer a truly unique Cantonese fusion dining experience- we pitch it as affordable luxury dining for all. Both Zak and I are very excited about the future."

These are two guys to watch very closely in the world of hospitality. They know what works...and more importantly what doesn't...they take care of their staff and they are keen to develop the Zen Group into one of the region's leading hospitality companies.





# Café Mercy shakes up the Newcastle cocktail scene

By Jack Grahamslaw

Being a devoted fan of Mother Mercy, I was keen to try its new sister venue, Café Mercy.

**The Cocktail & Spritz Café sits at the heart of Newcastle's Grey Street and brings its own enticing brand of cocktails and spritz. Modelled on a chic European café bar, Café Mercy offers an escape from city centre life with small plates and a pumping atmosphere.**

I pitched up to review the experience.

Whereas Mother Mercy is dimly lit and intimate, Café Mercy is a riot of colour. Bathed in shades of coral pink, the bar evokes a modern Mediterranean setting with rattan furnishings and white marble tables completing a supremely stylish look. And, if interiors are really your thing, there's even a hot pink neon corridor down to the toilets.

But, what of the cocktails? Café Mercy's menu is split into three different sections: 'Spritz & Fizz', Café Cocktails and Mother Mercy favourites. With a taste for the former, we kicked off with a brace of Aperol Spritz, spun up fantastically with Aperol, prosecco and Franklin & Son's soda and singing with fresh orange zest.

Following on, we bagged a couple of Martini's. Gin for me garnished with an olive and a 'Vesper'



for my pal – a real tour de force mixed with gin, vodka and vermouth.

We rounded off proceedings with an Old Fashioned. Café Mercy specialises in a praline version featuring Four Roses Bourbon, Amontillado, maple, pecan praline and coffee. This was done superbly well in addition to a classic Old Fashioned made for Woodford Reserve.



For those seeking a bit of ballast, Café Mercy also serves a selection of small plates perfect for snacking on alongside some quality cocktails.

Café Mercy slots seamlessly into the fabric of the city and is sure to be a real hit in addition to their other venues in the Cloth Market and Fenwick Newcastle.

Perfect for date nights, after-work drinks or a pre-theatre snifter.

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

## Go the Silk Route

Introducing Phil Hayden and Mark Douglas, the brains behind Silk Route Spirits, a premier quality spirit brand, based here in the North East, that uses only the finest ingredients to provide everyone with a memorable taste experience. The guys talk to Jackie Marston about their latest venture into the world of producing high quality alcoholic spirits.

### So, what is Silk Route Spirits?

"The historical Silk Road, an illustrious trade route spanning from ancient China to the bustling markets of Europe, is what drove our passion to establish Silk Route Spirits.

"Infused with a deep love for the tales of the Silk Road, and an urge for exploration, our fascination with the diverse cultures that contributed to the rich tapestry of flavours, we embarked on our journey to craft a unique range of gins in 2022.

"The Silk Road transports us from the lush emerald peaks of China, through the nomadic expanses of Central Asia, the rugged terrains of Afghanistan, and the ancient landscapes of Persia before travelling to Anatolia and working with European Venetian traders.

"The profound impact of this ancient trade route on shaping Western culture as we know it today is undeniable. Many of the flavours and tastes we now cherish have their roots along this historic corridor. Yet, our inspiration also led us to embrace more exotic elements, like Sumac, a lemon-flavored berry found in the wilds of modern-day Iran and Turkey, guiding us to a distinct Journey of Taste.



"Drawing inspiration from the Silk Road's legacy, we have meticulously crafted premium gins, each infused with a carefully curated selection of botanicals to deliver a one-of-a-kind flavour experience.

"Our unwavering commitment to quality and service is deeply rooted in our early experiences within the hospitality industry and a lifelong dedication to public and private sector work, which is why this is a perfect business for us to grow.

**For more information of Silk Route Spirits go to [www.silkroutespirits.co.uk](http://www.silkroutespirits.co.uk)**



# AUTUMN AFTERNOON TEA AT RADISSON BLU DURHAM

## **Tier 1: Sandwiches + Savoury**

Selection of finger sandwiches on white or brown bloomer

Cheese and spiced chutney

Roast beef with horseradish

Ham and Pease pudding

## **Tier 2: Time for Scones**

Classic sultana scones with Cornish clotted cream  
and a choice of preserve

## **Tier 3: Sweet Treats**

Miniature cakes and treats

Profiterole, carrot cake,  
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## A very Grand Parade

The multi-million-pound refurbishment of one of Tynemouth's most iconic hotels is entering its final phases, as The Inn Collection Group gears up to open The Tynemouth Castle Inn this autumn.

**A feature of the town's Grand Parade for more than 80 years overlooking the famous Longsands, the venue is set to embark on an exciting new chapter following a near 14-month programme of works.**

With the first guests expected to check in to the brand-new pub with rooms in early November, the first sneak peek has been given as the fit-out process gathers pace.

The changes to the venue are immediately apparent from the outside, with new rendering giving it a brilliant white appearance and new signage and window fittings embracing its art deco style.

Its newly constructed extensions are also fully in place, with additional bedrooms, a new fish and chip shop, Oswin's, and ice cream parlour Cones noticeably increasing the footprint of the venue.

These are in place of the old ballroom extension that occupied that part of the site and has been demolished as part of the renovations.

Upon entry from a newly created outdoor terrace to the front, that will allow guests to enjoy the stunning panoramic views of the shoreline below, the new bar is found directly ahead.

Laid out in an arrowhead configuration, it stretches back through the new seating areas and is more than ample to satisfy the anticipated demand of the inn.

Boasting several areas that are perfectly formed to create a cosy atmosphere, the venue is already showing the hallmarks that have become The Inn Collection Group's signature style.







Whilst it is full speed ahead in the bar, the rooms attached to the inn are getting set for their finishing touches, with much of their refurbishment already completed.

New décor, furniture, carpets, and bathrooms are already in situ, with many now only awaiting a final deep clean before being ready to welcome their guests.

Once reopened, The Tynemouth Castle Inn is set to be a popular feature with the company's eat, drink, sleep and explore ethos seeing the new pub open all day every day.

From its completely new kitchen, breakfasts will be available to both staying guests and walk-ins whilst the seasonal main menus will be packed with traditional pub classics.

Steak and grills are set to be an area of focus, with a broiler grill of the type already in place at key sites including North Yorkshire's The Harrogate Inn.

Utilising temperatures of 1600 – 1800 degrees Fahrenheit to create the perfect sear, a resting chamber completes the cook to ensure a juicy succulence to the chosen cuts.

For those looking to stay overnight, a total of 72 bedrooms will be in place, with a variety of configurations including, twin, double and family rooms.

Making the most of the commanding position more than 50 of the rooms will offer a sea view, whilst Juliette balconies will allow further opportunities to take in the fresh sea air.

Looking ahead to the imminent reopening, group CEO of The Inn Collection Group Sean Donkin said: "This stunning building is an institution on the Coast in Tynemouth and we are delighted to be giving this icon a new lease of life for people in the community and visitors alike to enjoy.

"Our restoration has been a significant investment and has been carefully carried out to preserve the individual character and distinctiveness of the building.

"We are looking forward to being a part of the community and contributing to North Tyneside's wider economic growth, prosperity and employment opportunities through increased, year-round trading.

"Our improved bar and dining areas are going to attract new and local custom whilst the increased bedrooms will generate increased overnight bookings throughout the year.

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





# Village People

By Michael Grahmslaw

The Village Hotel at Silverlink, Newcastle is a stone's throw away from Northern Insight HQ, so when the opportunity landed in my inbox to visit recently I jumped at the opportunity.





**After another frenetic day in the world of magazine publishing my wife Lisa and I made the short journey for what would be an early celebration for my birthday which fell the following day.**

Upon arrival there was a bustling throng in the warm reception area with the hotel full for the night. Always a good sign. We were moving into Great North Run weekend which is always a great one for the City.

After the friendliest of welcomes we adjourned to our super comfy room which came with all the "bells and whistles" you would expect from the Village brand including drench shower, WIFI, complimentary tea and coffee and Sky TV. There was even an early birthday present of a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc from General Manager Jason Dalus, a lovely touch.

Following a swift turnaround and a pre dinner livener we moved through to the tastefully appointed Pub and Grill restaurant which offered a hugely diverse menu with a great selection of local and international dishes.

After much perusal I kicked off with a hearty plate of BBQ ribs. The smoky and savoury scents made my mouth water before the first bite and the meat was tender and succulent throughout.



Lisa opted for a very tasty baked spinach dip with tortillas, creamy pecorino and mozzarella cheese served with salsa.

After a suitable comfort break we moved onto the main event of the evening.

I demolished spicy chicken pasta rigatoni, a delightful culinary experience combining spicy and creamy flavours which was perfect for this lifelong chilli fiend.

Taking the healthier route Lisa enjoyed roasted salmon fillet with mashed potatoes and tenderstem broccoli. She pronounced this delicious with the accompaniments providing balance and contrast to the richness of the fish. Washed down with an agreeable bottle of Pinot Grigio this had been sumptuous fayre with service also friendly, helpful and attentive throughout.

Sidestepping a delicious dessert menu we wound down a lovely night over coffee.

The following morning I dragged my now 52 year old self into the superb onsite leisure club which is unquestionably one of the best you'll find in North Tyneside. On hand there is a state of the art Technogym, daily fitness classes as well as a huge heated indoor pool jacuzzi, sauna and steam room, all perfect to work off the excesses of the night before.



Enroute back to my room I also noted VWorks, the hotels extensive co working space which is ideal for flexible workers and complete with hot desks and private meeting spaces.

Dont forget that the Village can offer your company great value for your annual Christmas party also.

This truly is a venue that ticks all the boxes for business, pleasure or leisure.

After a hearty cooked breakfast we made the short journey home wondering why we didnt visit this local gem more often.

**For further information visit the website [www.village-hotels.co.uk](http://www.village-hotels.co.uk)**







# Uncharted territory

Jack Grahamslaw goes off-piste with an eclectic new vegetarian menu at the Chart House in Newcastle.

**Since opening in 2022, The Chart House has carved out a fine reputation from its prime location on Newcastle's Quayside.**

The restaurant offers a "Maritime Spice Route" with creative cookery inspired by the Mediterranean, Arabian and South China Seas.

Its menu is exciting and varied in scope and offers the chance to dine all-out as a tapas style feast or in traditional starter/main course fashion.

Now, the Chart House is diversifying its offering with a parade of new vegetarian and vegan dishes, which underlines its commitment to offering a menu which is one-third plant-based.

I had the pleasure of visiting one Friday evening with my girlfriend, Lucy, to sample everything this new veggie offering had in store.

The venue is one of the most characterful in the city. The name itself refers to the building's nautical heritage being the former dwelling place of Matthew S Dodds, esteemed Victorian printer of books, maps and charts that sailors setting out to see would come to buy. Uniquely, the building is one of the only ones of its kind to survive the Great Fire of Newcastle in 1854.

A mere century and a half later, the dining area has been comprehensively transformed. The

dining area features numerous little nods to the area's naval past with rails of copper and chrome and a collection of seafaring sketches.

The Chart House is set over a number of different levels with a staircase between the stylish bar and pavement terrace area, open kitchen pass and 'top deck' dining room.

Its bright and airy aspect is conducive to conversation, so we got the drinks flowing with a brace of Asahi lagers which foreshadowed the menu's Asian influence.

Kicking off, we enjoyed starters of courgette fritters with spiced cauliflower and beet tzatziki and cauliflower skewers with homemade peanut sauce and pickled cucumber.

Mains arrived shortly thereafter. I enjoyed an earthy, goats cheese and chestnut mushroom tagliatelle embellished with a large hunk of sourdough. Lucy, meanwhile, tucked into the crispy Szechuan aubergine with black rice. This boasted true 'Umami' flavours with its nutty undertones bringing a good balance to the dish.

Naturally, this was washed down with an excellent bottle of Pinot Grigio which complemented the flavours perfectly.

To finish, we sampled a special birthday portion of lemon and raspberry parfait which Lucy lapped up with aplomb.

The Chart House boasts a diverse menu, anchored in rich flavours with a mix of small and larger plates carefully curated by a team of experienced chefs. If you're looking for a true vegetarian eating experience, this classy venue is off the charts.

**Chart House updates its menus seasonally, so be sure to visit their website for the latest, up-to-date offerings.**

**For more information, visit [pubcuure.com/charthouse](https://pubcuure.com/charthouse)**







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# Enjoy a country house Christmas

**Two of Durham's top hotels are promising partygoers and families a cracker of a Christmas with everything from parties and pantomimes to a little bit of festive pampering...**

**Ask any busy person what they would most like Santa to gift them in the run up to Christmas and there's every likelihood it will be for someone else to do the heavy lifting.**

If they're not cooking for the family, entertaining friends, or keeping the kids amused, they are so busy shopping, planning and making lists that they switch off only when their head hits the pillow.

But a fairy godmother – or two – is at hand in the shape of Ramside Hall Hotel Golf and Spa, at Carville, and Hardwick Hall Hotel, near Sedgfield; each of which has come up with a December programme of events guaranteed to take the strain when it comes to festive fun and entertainment.

Ramside Hall gets the ball rolling with a Christmas Comedy Club evening

on 24 November before a series of live bands take to the stage on a succession of party nights on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings throughout December.

And, on Sunday 3 December, good old-fashioned family fun is on offer with a special performance of the pantomime Cinderella.

This classic children's story is brought wonderfully and colourfully to life for the young and young at heart, while, for those who prefer bingo to Buttons, there's the chance to wield a dabber on Friday 8 December at a Bingo'n'Crazy night.

Throughout the month there's the chance to enjoy musical tributes to stars of the 80s and 90s along with the legendary Rat Pack and, of course, the man whose voice just seems to sum up Christmas; Michael Bublé.

On Sunday, 10 December, Ramside Hall Hotel gives its Christmas gift to customers in the form of its annual, complimentary, hour-long Santa Sunday show, with donations invited for its chosen charity.

Children will be able to actually meet the great man on 20 and 21 December, in the hotel's clubhouse, while adults dining at the hotel's Rib Room or Pemberton Restaurant will be soothed by the sound of traditional tunes, sung by carollers from 20 December to Christmas Eve.

While he's in Durham, the festive fellow is also planning to stop off at Hardwick Hall Hotel, which, like its sister venue, has a packed programme of fun and games for all the family throughout December.

With an outstanding choice of Christmas party nights, fabulous live entertainment and amazing food, this stunning hotel, set in acres of beautiful parkland, is the perfect backdrop for festive fun.





Its Decades Disco Party Nights include a two-course menu, followed by dancing to its very own Zodiac Disco. And the Festive Party Nights include a three-course party menu, live entertainment guaranteed to get the party started, and Zodiac Disco Party.

The Live Bavarian Party Experience is back by popular demand on 1 and 2 December, featuring live music from The Bavarian Stompers, a three-course meal, live entertainment and disco.

And, in the true spirit of Christmas, Hardwick Hall's Santa Sunday is on 17 December this year, with the chance for all ages to enjoy an hour-long live show, completely free of charge.

On Christmas day itself, the hotel's chefs and staff will all be working flat out to provide families with a fantastic festive feast before turning their attention to New Year. Each hotel is preparing to ring out the old year and ring in

2024 by pulling out all the stops to provide superb food and music so partygoers can dance and dine until the early hours.

And, of course the most important gift of all for the busy person - the one charged with ensuring this Christmas, like every Christmas, is as perfect, as special and memorable for every single member of the family as it can be...peace.

They even have that covered thanks to The Spa at Ramside Hall, where highly trained therapists and state of the art relaxation rooms, pools and treatment menus ensure that even the busiest person is pampered and prepared for whatever challenges the season brings.

So, come on Christmas...we're ready for you.

**For further information visit [www.ramsidehallhotel.co.uk](http://www.ramsidehallhotel.co.uk) or [www.hardwickhall.co.uk](http://www.hardwickhall.co.uk)**



*Ramside Hall's  
Bishop Suite set for a function*





# The Rockpool

Northumberland offers up a great selection of holiday choices, some of which are just perfect for a short break without a long drive. Here, **Antonia Brindle** reviews one of the real gems of our coast – **The Rockpool in Amble.**

**“Sometimes we all need a change of scene, but without having to travel too far.**

“So started our search, with two other couples, for somewhere with a hot tub, walkable to pubs and restaurants, dog friendly, with a log burner, a decent kitchen and three double bedrooms. Quite a hard wish list it appears!

“On this occasion we knew the confines of a lodge or caravan would be too much, as the menfolk and two furry kids were coming with us, so something with more substantial walls and more space was needed.

“We found The Rockpool on Booking.com. Situated in Amble, less than a 45 minute drive, it ticked all the boxes. And at a decent price. The photos looked great, the reviews were good. And so, it was booked.

“And now it is rebooked for this winter. We never go to the same place twice. Ever. Until The Rockpool.

“What a fabulous property to take a break. Beautifully decorated to a high standard, clean as a whistle and complete with a completely

private hot tub, which is in a nestled position in the yard with high stone walls that protects it from the winter month elements. Ideal for warming the bones after a brisk walk on the beach, whilst enjoying a glass of vino in the thoughtfully provided plastic glasses.

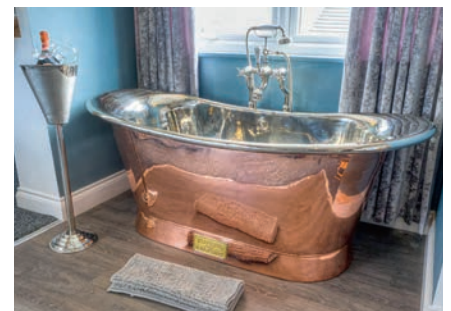
“The location of The Rockpool offers up shops in walking distance, lots of eating options from fish and chips to gourmet choices (even with doggo’s in tow) and numerous friendly pubs and bars to enjoy a tipple by a roaring fire or in a cozy corner. Despite that the kitchen in the cottage is so welcoming and practical, we still cooked a good few times and as the dining room offered plenty seating and space for our party, we ate together before settling in to play some board games.

“Retiring to the lounge, lighting the wood burning stove, we also enjoyed chilling and watching some movies together when the rain came.

‘My other half and I drew the lucky straw and bagged ourselves the top floor bedroom. A gorgeous converted attic, the room offers sea views, the comfiest of beds, plenty of head room and a stunning free standing bath for us to enjoy! Our friends were just as happy with their rooms, which all boasted large beds too and there was never a queue for the bathroom thanks to a ground floor and first floor option.

“For location, amenities, comfort and space we all gave the cottage 10 out of 10. With plenty of parking handy and a lovely welcome pack, we can’t think of anything the owners haven’t thought of already to improve it!”

***The Rockpool can be found on booking.com, Air B and B, VRBO and a number of other reputable sites. Simply google The Rockpool Amble and choose your favourite booking platform.***







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## Exploring beyond the beach in Mauritius *By Stuart Forster*

A combination of stylish beachfront resorts, tropical sunshine and soft sandy beaches mean that many travellers who make the overnight flight from London happily forgo sightseeing during holidays in Mauritius. Yet for those so inclined, there's much to do beyond sunbathing, sea swimming and sipping cocktails mixed with locally distilled rum.

**The modest size of the main island means that journeys between even the most distant points rarely take more than 90 minutes. Consequently, practically anywhere is accessible during day trips.**

My temporary base was a sumptuous villa with a private pool and terrace at Maradiva Villas Resort and Spa by Wolmar on the south-west of the island. The region is celebrated for its vibrant sunsets and on my first evening the sky glowed gold and then deepened to a magnificent red.

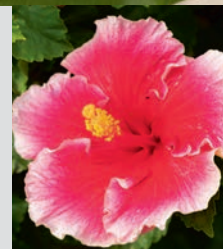
The next morning, I sipped coffee while observing red-whiskered bulbuls flitting between the outdoor breakfast tables. They helped themselves to departed guests' leftovers before the attentive staff had a chance to clear tables. Afterwards, over at the spa, the resident Ayurvedic doctor outlined the holistic philosophy of the ancient Indian medicinal system and recommended a relaxing full-body massage to ease me into my stay.

Glistening with spice-infused oil, I headed straight to the chef's organic garden to learn how to cook local dishes including Mauritian chicken curry. The outdoor demonstration included an insight into traditional ingredients followed by lunch with fellow guests

Afterwards, while plodding in the coral-strewn water of the Indian Ocean I gazed towards nearby Le Morne Brabant, one of several mountains jutting above the shoreline. Hiking is a way of exploring the UNESCO World Heritage Site, whose steep sides and dense foliage once aided people escaping slavery to maintain their newfound liberty.

The country's only other world heritage site is Aapravasi Ghat. By the waterfront in Port Louis, the capital city, it is similar to New York's Ellis Island in that many of the country's residents can trace their ancestors' arrivals via the complex. The visitor centre explains that, after slavery was abolished in 1835, around 462,000 indentured labourers were shipped to Mauritius to work on plantations. That indentured labour system – which the centre portrays as barely more humane than what it replaced – was subsequently introduced in other British colonies.

Among the dark grey basalt stonework of a long-disused kitchen, I spotted 'COWEN' imprinted on yellowy firebricks. The firebricks are a legacy of global trade during the days of the British Empire. They were transported from the now-demolished Blaydon-on-Tyne factory that inspired Firebrick Brewery's name.





To gain my bearings in Port Louis, I headed to Fort Adelaide, a historic citadel with fine views over the Mauritian capital, including the neighbouring Champ de Mars Racecourse. The ramparts' volcanic stone radiated summer heat, leaving me longing for one of the iced cocktails I'd been enjoying each evening back at my resort's Breaker's Bar.

Instead, I cooled off downtown thanks to the air-conditioning in the Bank of Mauritius Museum. Digital screens tell the story of the island's money while cabinets showcase banknotes and coins dating back to dinars used centuries ago by Arab traders.

For outdoor adventure, I headed to La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park. When the now-extinct Bassin Blanc volcano last erupted, 100,000 years ago, minerals and gases tinged lava with 23 colours – hence the park's name. Straddling a quad bike, I twisted along a hillside track, pausing at a waterfall, before descending nearly a mile along the longest zipline in Mauritius for a bird's eye view of the multicoloured landscape.



After striding out in Black River Gorges National Park, which has trails for hikers of all levels, I took on liquid – but not necessarily the sort recommended by nutritionists after hiking. I enjoyed a liberal rum tasting at the Rhumerie de Chamarel, a distillery within view of Black River Peak – the highest mountain in Mauritius.

On my final day in Mauritius, a speedboat tour of islands off the east coast brought the thrills of thumping across open water at high speed and a close encounter with a pod of dolphins.

Enviously I looked on at the seemingly smiling sea creatures as they arched through the water, aware that they would still be enjoying the Indian Ocean long after I'd returned home.



## Travel information

Visit [mauritiusnow.com](http://mauritiusnow.com) for information about things to do on the island.

Since 29 October Air Mauritius' ([airmauritius.com](http://airmauritius.com)) daily flights between London and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport are from Gatwick Airport rather than Heathrow.

Kreola ([kreola.mu](http://kreola.mu)) operates airport transfers and excursions on Mauritius.

Following a major refurbishment, Maradiva Villas Resort and Spa ([maradiva.com](http://maradiva.com)), which offers luxury accommodation at Wolmar will be reopen from 1 November 2023.

Sands Suites Resort and Spa ([sands.mu](http://sands.mu)) is a beachfront resort with an infinity pool and views of Le Morne Brabant mountain.





# Taking kind action is super important



**Not because it ticks a box, wins clients, looks good or because you must.**

## **Genuine kind action makes a difference to people, the planet, and the future.**

Affecting both you and I today and tomorrow. Kind action is a conscious choice.

It's choosing for the consequence of your actions to have a positive impact. But why?

People often ask me, why am I motivated to help businesses and citizens to take kind action?

I can't answer in a direct fashion, but I can tell the stories that create not just one reason but a thousand reasons why. Christmas for instance, is a time for joy for many but the worst time of year for others.

And we are speeding towards Christmas, so we are in full festive kindness flow as we ramp up our kind activity to deliver our Kind Christmas Experience, delivering a stack of opportunity for businesses and people, me and you both, to be kind and make a difference.

We are delighted to announce the experience will be in collaboration with One Strawberry Lane, bringing the opportunity to be Kind at Christmas into the heart of the city.

We are super grateful to our kind sponsors, who have chosen to take kind action and help us make Christmas sparkle for those less fortunate than ourselves:

- Sarah Pittendrigh - Mentor, Coach, Author & Speaker  
[www.sarahpittendrigh.com](http://www.sarahpittendrigh.com)
- Simply Bows & Chair Covers - Wedding & Event Suppliers  
[www.simplybowsandchaircovers.co.uk](http://www.simplybowsandchaircovers.co.uk)

- Northumbrian Water Group,  
[www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)
- Robson Laidler - Accountants & Business Advisors  
[www.robson-laidler.co.uk](http://www.robson-laidler.co.uk)
- Team Festive - Christmas Decoration Service  
[www.teamfestive.com](http://www.teamfestive.com)
- Oak Electricals - Domestic, Commercial & Industrial Electrical Service,  
[www.oakelec.co.uk](http://www.oakelec.co.uk)

So, why? Well this is just a snippet of the stories from last years' experience...

Izabella was born with chronic conditions and in her short life has undergone multiple surgeries. Her Mum who had previously had a small craft business and supported local causes, was studying to become a Stoma Nurse and Counsellor but due to medical complications and neglect Izabella suffered, she had to step down from her training to become a full-time carer. There is no support in society that helps those trying to help others.

Our Pay It Forward Storytime with Mrs Claus, provided a ticket for Izabella and her brother to experience the magic of Christmas kindness.

Izabella's Mum kindly let us share her story. All children and adults are protected by Safeguarding measures during and after the event. Mum shared her gratitude on socials with this wonderful picture:

"Got a lovely message nominating Izabella to a day at the civic theatre for being a little inspiration for everything she has and still is going through. This seriously touched my heart. No one realises the strengths this girl has, the fights, the laughs, and the tears. Thank you so much Michelle Jones it seriously touched my heart that you notice how much she goes through. Means so much you don't realise. Thank you again."

## **Inclusive Choir - True Colour Theatre**

There wasn't a dry eye in the house as the wonderful choir of children and young adults with visible and non-visible disabilities performed Christmas Carols, signing, and singing.

The opportunity brought a new audience to this amazing charity, raising awareness and confidence in the group. Making performance arts accessible for all and celebrating difference is at the heart of the charity.

## **Christmas Giving Activity - Kenton Food Bank**

On the day it was a delight to see people coming to enjoy the experience with donations of food and warm clothes. One donation was hundreds of advent calendars, meaning the food bank could add a treat in food parcels delivering Christmas spirit. The giving activity ensured giving continued beyond the event, ensuring the food bank received donations that surpassed the need over the Christmas period.

## **Ethical Small Business Market - Amari Wild**

We sold out! Please do more events. Un-represented small ethical business Amari Wild not only sold out but really enjoyed the experience and felt very supported. The market isn't about 'selling' it's about nurturing the businesses and charities and supporting consumers to make kind choices. Ensuring the kindness of Christmas not only protects people and planet but sustains small businesses and boosts the local authority.

***If you want a slice of the kindness pie this Christmas, we still have opportunities for you and your business to get in on the kind action, contact Michelle at Kind Currency.***

***You have a choice, to be kind. Why would you not!?***

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



**KIND**  
CURRENCY



# Kind Christmas Experience

**Giving Banks  
& Kind Activities**



Give Kindness This Christmas

**PAY IT FORWARD  
Christmas Movie**



Magic of Kindness

**Inclusive  
Christmas Choirs**



**PAY IT FORWARD  
Father Christmas**

Bringing the  
magic of Santa  
to all children.



**Kind Christmas  
Workshops**

**In collaboration with**  
**ONE STRAWBERRY LANE**  
**Thursday 30th November**  
**4pm to 8pm**



**SHOP KIND  
MARKET**

Make A Difference with  
Ethical & Sustainable Gifts



**Gift of  
Magical Learning**



**Story Time with Mrs Claus  
and local authors**



*Sarah Pittendrigh*



**ROBSON / LAIDLER**  
BUSINESS ADVISORS

**ROBSON / LAIDLER**  
ACCOUNTANTS



# In conversation with...

Michael Grahamslaw met...

## Claire Parry

*Managing Director of Week2Week Serviced Apartments the accommodation experts for extended stays, projects, relocation, and business travel.*

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

Although I was heavily into Art and Design, I really didn't know what I wanted to do other than gain some life experience. I worked as a Saturday girl in a hairdressers from the age of 14, which I hated, earning the paltry sum of £12 a day (a lot back then for hairdressing juniors!). I also had a spell in hospitality including roles at Chillingham Castle. I had grown up around my mum Janet Jackson who ran a small guest house where from the age of seven I helped out with the day-to-day responsibilities. I also experienced lots of different office environments within the corporate market specialising in management and operations.

### Describe your current role.

My mum set up the business initially with her own properties before moving into managing properties. We offer a wide range of short-stay property which offer the perfect mix of cleanliness and intimacy you would expect from a hotel but with the added space and comfort you would expect from your own home. I fully took over the reins in 2013.

### What can people expect when dealing with Week2Week?

Consistency, integrity and quality of service are our core values and at the heart of everything we do. We are very people centric and take a genuine interest in every booking we take making sure everything is accountable and genuine. We offer all clients, property owners and guests, authenticity in a demanding world.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

I get to work with brilliant people every day!

From modest and humble beginnings our longevity is something that I am delighted with. Along the way we have gone from being a very paper-based



Claire Parry

business and modernised into something completely different.

I am also extremely proud that we have been regularly shortlisted for a global relocate award.

### How has your industry changed?

Our industry is extremely fast-paced and in the office we often describe it as a Tardis where time speeds up. The landscape is very different to pre-covid times due to traveller behaviour changing in addition to Brexit and its' impact on the UK. We are seeing more extended and long-term stays required.







This is mainly due to the process corporate clients must go through to justify physical travel and why it cannot just be done via a video call. Whilst there is still uncertainty, we continue to see higher demand for serviced accommodation, and we continue to adapt as the business dictates.

#### **What are you currently working on?**

A number of things including a strategy for the new financial year and also creating a new role within the business. We are also aiming for more portfolio growth and to improve the business travel side of the business.

We are also looking forward to doing more sponsorship with the Entrepreneurs Forum and remaining active members of the North East Chamber of Commerce and the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative.

#### **Tell us about your team.**

Our core team of four is amazing as is our extended team of around 40 people who we work with on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

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

Just keep going and don't get complacent.

#### **What was been your biggest challenge?**

Juggling work and home life is an ongoing challenge. I'm definitely still a work in progress!



#### **Who are your heroes and mentors?**

My late mum for her insight and acumen and my husband and sons who inspire me every day!

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

I like nothing better than putting my wellies on and going outdoors with my family and dogs. We also love to visit our static caravan in Northumberland – our home from home! I also enjoy a good crime drama.

**For further information visit**  
[www.week2week.co.uk](http://www.week2week.co.uk)







## The C Word - Christmas

The end of the year is fast approaching, which means it's time to think about how you are going to make your stakeholders feel valued this Christmas. Here Loren Nardini of Pro-Ad, a supplier of Promotional Merchandise, gives readers an insight into what and why...

**Christmas is a great marketing opportunity. By investing in thoughtful gifts for stakeholders, clients or customers, you can really make your company stand out. And by giving products that are both useful and branded, that tangible item will always remind them of you and your brand.**

That constant reminder of your brand can not only increase sales, it can also improve customer care, brand awareness, and staff loyalty. The BPMA has recently shared that 52% of people will recommend a service, product or goods if they have received a branded item they value. And Christmas is the



time to make others feel good, so by making them feel warm about you, they are going to be spreading cheer about you!

It's important that you focus on whatever your key messages are, so if environmental impact is important to you, then the gift needs to echo that. Our team are great solution suggesters, so if you are stuck for ideas, they will work closely with you and find the perfect product. Some of our team's favourites this year are:

**Our Branded Bamboo Speaker.** Priced between £15 and £25 depending on how many you buy, this mini speaker is rechargeable and will cheer any office up during the festive season with its flashing lights!

**The Natural Relaxing Set** in a Cotton Bag is a lovely bag of treats, that any customer will appreciate. Time to chill is so important and if you can give them a zen moment, they will be a fan of your company forever.

**The 100% Recycled Ice Scraper** is a useful gift at Christmas as the weather chills and if you want something totally customisable, then we have a whole range of soft plush toys, socks (who doesn't love socks in their stocking at Christmas?) and accessories.

We also have gifts that never stops giving, like the incredible Rocket Book, a reusable pad that uploads to your laptop.

Whatever you choose to give, there are a number of benefits to your company. The first being that you can claim the VAT back on branded gifts, and they can go through the books, coming off your profit. Positive attracts positive, which is why doing good and giving to others spreads the word that you are a generous, altruistic company. You will stand out from competition, create a differentiation, and create word of mouth. It also opens doors for you to cross-sell or upsell!

51% of those taking part in the BPMA research said that they would continue to be more engaged with the brand who gave them a good piece of merchandising. Christmas is particularly impactful and clearly should have a budget allocated annually.

***If you want to make your Christmas gift stand out from the crowd, don't leave it any longer. Visit [www.proad.co.uk](http://www.proad.co.uk) for some initial ideas and then get in touch with a team member on 01670 518928 so we can ensure you get the best for your budget!***





## JESMOND DENE HOUSE

NEWCASTLE – UPON – TYNE

### Lunch in December Festive Set Menu

Lunch Wednesday - Saturday, 12-2pm then 6-9pm for Dinner  
**£38 - 2 Course, £45 - 3 Course with coffee and Petits Fours**

### Christmas Market • Sunday 3rd December

**£8pp 11- 4pm**

Join us in our Great Hall for a festive shopping day at our very own Christmas Market. The stalls will range from food and drink, to local craft companies and boutique stores. Receive a glass of mulled wine or mocktail on arrival included in the ticket price.

Advance booking essential.

### Festive Afternoon Tea in The Great Hall

**17th & 23rd December**

**£42pp** includes Live Music, Glass of Prosecco, Festive Afternoon Tea, Tea/Coffee

### Christmas Eve • Sunday 24th December

Serving A la Carte and Festive Set Menu between 12-7.30pm  
 Also serving Afternoon Tea in The Billiard Room between 1-4pm

### Boxing Day • Tuesday 26th December & New Years Day • Monday 1st January

**Sunday Style Traditional Roast** Served between 12-6pm  
**£65pp** includes 3 Course Roast and coffee/mince pies

### New Years Eve • Sunday 31st December (Daytime)

Champagne/Sparkling Afternoon Tea, served between 12-4pm  
**£48pp** includes a glass of Champagne

### New Years Eve • Sunday 31st December

**8 Course Set Menu** Served between 7-9.30pm  
**£85pp** includes a Glass of Champagne on arrival, a glass of fizz at midnight and a live singer

For more information call 0191 212 3000 [www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk](http://www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk)

# NEHA's annual awards gala illuminates excellence in the North East



The North East Hotelier's Association (NEHA), with a history spanning over three decades, will be holding its prestigious gala at the Federation Brewery, Gateshead this year.

**NEHA plays a pivotal role in offering crucial support, guidance, and fostering a sense of community among hoteliers and businesses connected to the vibrant hospitality industry.**

Distinguished as one of the largest associations of its kind in England, NEHA currently boasts a membership of around 50 of the region's most prominent hotels, serving as the united voice of the hospitality sector. Its primary mission is to advocate for change and

scrutinise decisions affecting their industry, all the while ensuring that their voices resonate in the corridors of power. NEHA is dedicated to simplifying the lives of hoteliers by addressing common challenges faced in the field.

Last year, around 330 attendees enjoyed the experience at their annual awards ceremony. However, expectations are soaring for this year's event, set to take place on Thursday, October 26th, with an estimated record-breaking attendance of up to 400 individuals, all gathering to applaud the crème de la crème of the hospitality industry.

The organisation annually recognises industry accomplishments with the Excellence Awards, which commend outstanding contributors at an opulent black-tie gala.

Attendees at the gala will enjoy a delicious 3-course dinner, accompanied by live music, with none other than Georgie favourite Charlie Richmond serving as the evening's host.

In collaboration with keen regional sponsors, the gala puts a spotlight on exceptional individuals in ten categories, with awards given to those who have showcased excellence. Their primary objective is to identify remarkable individuals who have gone the extra mile in delivering exceptional service.

### Categories:

- **Service Excellence**
- **Warmest Welcome**
- **Eco Excellence**
- **Culinary Excellence**
- **Inspirational Leader**
- **Support Services**
- **Sales Excellence**
- **Cleanliness Excellence**
- **Rising Star**
- **Best Newcomer**

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A FAMILY BUSINESS SINCE 1907

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





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





# **Holiday Inn** **Where Christmas begins!**

Join us at the Holiday Inn Washington to  
celebrate Christmas 2023 in style!

## **Fab - Yule - Ous Party Nights**

Enjoy a three-course meal and then dance the night away with our DJ who  
will take you through the decades with all the party classics!

**From £29.95 per person**

## **Santa Sunday Lunch**

Get all the family together and enjoy a two-course Sunday lunch prepared  
by our talented chef. Includes a visit from the big man himself with  
a gift for every child.

**From £24.95 per person & £15.00 per child**

## **Christmas Day lunch**

Nothing brings the true feeling of Christmas Day closer than a delicious  
festive lunch with your nearest and dearest. Enjoy a fantastic four-course  
meal, leaving us to do the dishes!

**From £59.95 per person & £32.50 per child**

## **New Year's Eve Family Party**

Let's get the party started with a night for all the family to enjoy! You will be  
greeted with a drink upon arrival, followed by a two-course buffet, children's  
party games and disco.

**From £59.95 per person & £32.50 per child**

### **Holiday Inn Washington**

Emerson Road, Washington,  
NE37 1LB

T: 03333 209 356

[HIWASHINGTONHOTEL.CO.UK/WHATS-ON](https://hiwashingtonhotel.co.uk/whats-on)





# Unlocking confidence and wellness at NCL Private Healthcare: A North East gem

In the realm of self-improvement and well-being, the North East has a hidden gem that shines brightly in the world of aesthetics and health.

**NCL Private Healthcare, nestled in the heart of this vibrant region, is redefining the way we approach self-confidence and body wellness. What sets them apart is their dedication to offering two transformative services – Hair Transplants and 3D Liposuction – that are both sought after and groundbreaking.**

## A tress to impress: The magic of hair transplants

Hair loss can profoundly impact one's self-esteem, affecting not just how we look but how we feel. NCL Private Healthcare understands the emotional toll of hair loss, which is why they have become a beacon of hope for those seeking a solution. Their approach to Hair Transplants is nothing short of remarkable.

NCL's founder and lead practitioner, Dr. Kalra, brings over a decade of expertise to the table. His specialisation in scalp, beard, and eyebrow Follicular Unit Extraction (FUE) hair transplantation is coupled with a unique proficiency in revision surgeries. For those who have faced the disappointment of unsuccessful hair transplants elsewhere, NCL's clinic is a haven for reparation and revival.

The benefits of their hair transplants extend beyond Dr. Kalra's expertise. These procedures are conducted using state-of-the-art techniques and are known for their natural, long-lasting



Dr. Kalra

results. Importantly, they offer an invaluable advantage - no need to travel abroad. NCL Private Healthcare's presence in Newcastle Upon Tyne allows for convenient access to world-class hair transplants right here in the North East.

## Trimming troubles: The elegance of 3D liposuction

3D Liposuction is another feather in the cap of NCL Private Healthcare, demonstrating their commitment to holistic well-being. This non-invasive body contouring and fat reduction treatment harnesses cutting-edge technologies such as Cryolipolysis (fat freezing) and Ultrasound Cavitation, ensuring that you experience some of the most effective treatments available.

What's remarkable is the complete lack of downtime. Unlike traditional liposuction, where extensive recovery periods are required, 3D Liposuction grants you the freedom to carry on with your daily life right after each treatment. It's an exquisite blend of science and convenience.



At NCL Private Healthcare, the North East's crown jewel for hair transplants and 3D Liposuction, the pursuit of confidence and wellness takes centre stage. Dr. Kalra and his team are not just practitioners; they are architects of transformation. Their presence in the North East means that the journey to self-improvement is more accessible than ever. Discover the difference at NCL Private Healthcare, where your well-being is the ultimate masterpiece.

**Contact the clinic now!**  
1 West Road, Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne  
[info@nclprivatehealthcare.com](mailto:info@nclprivatehealthcare.com)  
01661 613 650



# In conversation with...

*Fresh from their promotion to Division One of the County Championship Michael Grahamslaw spoke to...*

## Rob Warren

*Venue Director, Durham Cricket Events.*

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

I wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps and become an electrician however I started working in hospitality 35 years ago whilst at school and once you start in this industry it's hard to leave.

### Tell us about your current role?

My Current role is venue director of Durham Cricket Events which is a business operating within Durham Cricket. With the team we look after all cricket events which includes player catering, hospitality, and fan catering. We also carry out events all year round from 1-1 meetings to concerts and events up to 15,000 people. We are currently in the planning stage to build and then operate a 155-bedroom hotel on the site which will have a huge impact on my role moving forward as well as having a huge impact on the local area.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

The setup and start of the Durham Cricket event business.

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

Year on year it's become so much more challenging, financially with staffing, food and general costs it's become a real balancing act, if we passed on all our cost increases nobody could afford to do anything, so we must come up with new ways and ideas to keep the offering and pricing similar whilst trying to make some margin. Recruitment in the industry has changed massively as the industry does struggle to entice talent due to the tasks and hours people can be expected to work.

### What are you currently working on?

I am currently working on the large events we hope to bring in 2024 from sporting events, food festivals and concerts.



Rob Warren

### Tell us about the team you work with?

I am so lucky to have the team I have around me. They are a hard working & caring team who during the season go above and beyond and often put the business before everything in their life's and I could not be prouder of them.

### What is the best piece of business advice you been given?

In hospitality you must keep looking at ways of improving the customer journey, if you become complacent your customer will notice and can look at different options.

### What has been your biggest challenge?

Keeping a new business, afloat during covid and then the rebuild of team and clients.

### Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

Outside of the business it must be all sport grassroot coaches who give up their evening and weekends to support young players journeys. Inside business must be the managers and area managers that I have worked with as I would like

to say I have adapted my managerial style by working with these guys.

### What does 2024 hold for you?

From a club point of view, it's a massive year with it being our first year back in the 1st Division. Should the planning go ahead for the hotel, next year will be a huge year as we hope to break ground on the project which will take a lot of our time whilst we still try and build the current business.

### How do you unwind outside of work?

I try to unwind with football. I am a season ticket holder at Harrogate Town. This is often more stressful than anything, but I have learnt over the years to have low expectations. I also coach under 12s football which is a great way to switch off from the day and try to develop the boys in their life and football journey.

### Favourite Book and Boxset?

I am not a great reader of books; favourite boxset is Peaky Blinders.

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





## For the love of your gut!

A recent adverse reaction to a takeaway meal caused me to look closer into gut health and possible causes of gastro-intestinal upset.

**Our bodies are made up of about 39 trillion bacteria that help to protect our bodies and keep us healthy. Most of these bacteria live in our gut and help to expel bad bacteria and break down fibre, as well as producing vitamins like B12 and K.**

Sometimes our bodies' balance can be disrupted by an increase in bad bacteria due to environmental factors such as pollution or lifestyle choices such as unhealthy foods.

Research suggests that as much as 70% of our immune health lies in our gut, which is why maintaining our gastrointestinal health is essential for overall wellness. However, our body's gut bacteria is very delicate and can easily be disrupted.

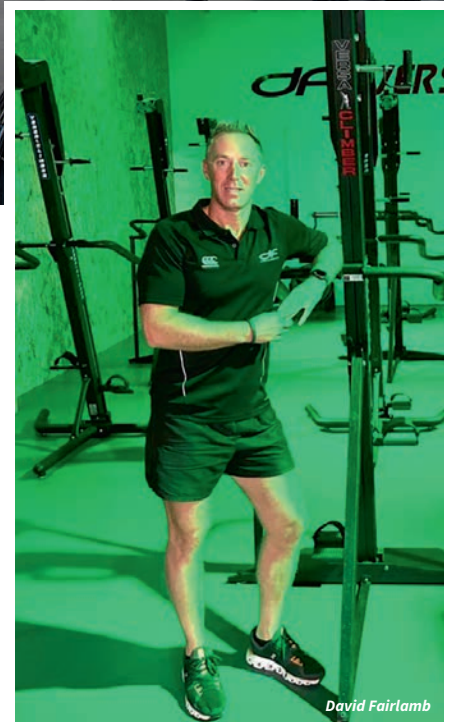
When bad bacteria overtakes the good, our gut health and immune system become compromised. This makes us more prone to developing a number of health issues, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), urinary tract infections, colitis and high cholesterol to name a few.

The most popular and effective strains of good bacteria are Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium. (These can be ingested readily via probiotic products)

A disrupted balance of these bacterial strains can contribute to a range of disorders and diseases including obesity, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and can even affect our mental health. It is therefore very important to consider the impact of what you eat and the lifestyle you choose in order to safeguard longevity and prevent disease.

Highly refined and processed foods are not natural to our body and it's not what we were designed to eat. Intense heat processes, additives and preservatives and chemicals strip away any beneficial nutritional content during manufacturing processes. A diet that consists predominantly of these types of foods will ultimately have a huge detrimental effect on health and how you feel day to day.

Research suggests there is no proven direct correlation between exercise and improved



David Fairlamb

gut health, but because people who exercise regularly tend to eat more healthily, their gut health overall tends to be better and they suffer less with ill-health and chronic disease.

Studies have shown that exercise decreases inflammatory signals and promotes a more regulated gut environment as it can help improve the lining of the gut.

Age, genetics, body composition, medications, the presence of disease, dietary changes, and stress (such as sleep deprivation) are also factors that might impact the composition and function of the gut.

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

### David's summing up...

*Eating healthy natural foods that our bodies are designed to eat is still the best way forward, not only for gut health, but for your weight, wellbeing and longevity of life.*



Great fun,  
safe,  
non weight  
bearing and only  
**£10**  
per class!



David Fairlamb

# **THERE AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH!**

Supercharge your metabolism at the  
only gym in the UK with a custom  
designed VersaClimber hub...



David Fairlamb Fitness





# The Last Word

The recent investigation into the escalating cost of HS2 raises serious concerns at the appalling mismanagement and the deliberate steps taken to conceal the spiralling costs.

**The original estimate of £36billion had escalated to £100billion by October when the Prime Minister announced the scrapping of the Birmingham to Manchester link. Whistleblowers were silenced or ignored.**

If the overruns and poor management at HS2 had been uncovered sooner, the Manchester section, headline of the levelling up agenda, may have been saved.

However, the whole egocentric project with inflated claims of what it would achieve for the country and the economy, has been trimmed to save massive overspending of taxpayers money. Back to the promise of dualling the A1, loose cash by comparison.

There remains the need for the public to know that there will be transparency in significant public sector projects to avoid similar fiascos in the future.

On a recent trip to a very sunny Alicante, I enjoyed a visit to the castle on top of Mount Benacantil, at a height of 166 metres, towering over the harbour and the marina. It rejoices in the name Castillo de Santa Bárbara, or as we might say, 'Saint Barbara Castle'. An even more impressive recognition memorial to the Labour MP (First Secretary of State in Harold Wilson's cabinet) than being Baroness of Blackburn.

The death of Sir Bobby Charlton has been mourned across the world. Bobby, a working class lad from Ashington, rose to become probably the greatest English footballer. Surviving the 1958 Munich air disaster, he won everything in football including the World Cup



Barry Speker

and the European Cup, and beat Eusebio to win the Ballon d'Or in 1966. We could vicariously celebrate his achievements as a Geordie.

What a pity he was not spotted by Newcastle United as was his mother's cousin Jackie Milburn.

It is still heart warming to see the picture of Bobby and elder brother Jackie embrace at the end of the 1966 World Cup Final.

I was fortunate several times to see Bobby play at St James Park. He always managed to score against Newcastle.

The recent Mansion House speech by King Charles was welcome in stressing courtesy and Britain's 'deep wells' of shared values of 'civility and tolerance', the space 'to think and speak clearly' and the 'duty of care' we owe to one another. He warned against a 'shouting and incriminatory society'.

This may have seemed aposite when Sir Robert Simcox, the Commissioner for Countering Terrorism sounded an alarm that a good test for the health of any society is 'to consider how it treats its Jewish population'. By this metric he said 'the UK is very sick indeed'.

Following the brutal inhuman atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists in Israel on 7th October, killing over 2000 civilians, more than unease at 100,000 people marching in London with anti-Semitic chants and calls for 'Jihad'; and a 1500% increase in anti-Semitic incidents?

Support from President Biden, many Western states and religious leaders and Rishi Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer are reassuring. The irresponsible attitude of sections of the media, particularly the BBC, is not.

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