WOMEN IN INNOVATION
Going beyond boundaries
2021/22
As the UK’s national innovation agency, it is our mission to **inspire, involve** and **invest** in business innovation. Following a record-breaking number of applications, I’m delighted to introduce you to the **winners of Innovate UK’s Women in Innovation awards.**

We proudly support this diverse group of trailblazing women, who are changing the world through the power of their ideas.

Their innovations underpin solutions, inspired by societal and environmental challenges, as well as their own lived experiences. I hope their stories, documented throughout this brochure, will encourage and inspire others to follow their lead.

This Women in Innovation Programme is critically important. For the UK to become a global hub of innovation by 2035, we must put work in now to harness our diverse range of untapped talent from across the country. While access to finance is one of the biggest barriers to women successfully innovating in business, we are also aware that we must increase the diversity of role models in business and innovation if we are to inspire and attract more innovators.

‘Our Women in Innovation programme aims to address both these issues and more’

Each year, our Women in Innovation programme invests in high-potential, women business leaders with a tailored package of financial support, mentorship and business growth consultancy.

The programme also supports a vibrant community, involving thousands of women innovators from across the UK.

Across all of this, through engagement with schools, regions and local and national media, the programme promotes our award winners as relatable role models that challenge stereotypes and can inspire our next generation of innovators.

With the backing of the Women in Innovation programme, Innovate UK aims to accelerate the entrepreneurial journeys of this exceptional group of innovators. I wish them all the best as they continue on this journey that will help build a fairer, more sustainable and more prosperous future for us all.
Foreword

Jo Shanmugalingam
Director General Science, Innovation and Growth at Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Innovation is a critical tool in tackling the UK’s biggest challenges both now and in the years ahead.

Improvements in technology and innovation are a fundamental source of productivity and economic growth. Innovation will therefore be crucial for our economic recovery from the pandemic and levelling up the UK. It is also vital for individual businesses: to be competitive, they must innovate to provide the best possible goods and services for consumers.

However, innovation is, and must be, for everyone and I am delighted that the Women in Innovation Awards 2022 are bringing together the UK’s innovation community to rightly celebrate 38 of the most innovative women in the UK and their ground-breaking ideas. I’m delighted that these awards continue not only to support our fantastic women innovators to turn their ideas into valuable solutions to global challenges, but also to inspire the next generation of women to follow their entrepreneurial ambitions.
Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of the Women in Innovation programme which forms an integral part of Innovate UK’s 2021-2025 Plan for Action for UK Business Innovation. Through the Women in Innovation programme, we are nurturing pioneering women to embrace innovation, grow their businesses, and develop their own diverse teams for positive economic, environmental, and societal change.

Six years on from its launch, the Women in Innovation programme is going from strength to strength with ever greater numbers of women innovating in business.

As we enter a post-pandemic world in the UK, it is essential for us to increase our support and reaffirm the strength of our commitment to the UK’s emerging women innovators whose businesses are meeting the pressing challenges of today. In 2021, we received a record number of applications and selected 38 remarkable applicants for our Women in Innovation Awards. These ambitious and pioneering winners, located in all regions of the UK, are working on a wide range of innovations across many different sectors.

From a blood test to allow earlier diagnosis of ovarian cancer to wearable tech that acts like your own physio and ‘leather’ made from garden waste, the winners’ game-changing innovations are tackling some of society’s biggest issues. The stories of our inspirational award winners will inspire the next generation of women changemakers.
Dismantling barriers

The Rose Review published in March 2022 reported that during the past two years, more women than ever have started new businesses. Over 140,000 all-female founded companies were created last year, and this figure is growing by over a third each year. It means that in total over 20% of new firms are now led by women.

When we launched the Women in Innovation programme in 2016, only one in seven applications for Innovate UK funding were led by women, despite the fact that success rates between men and women were largely equal. Since launching in 2016, Innovate UK has seen a 70% increase in the number of female-led applications, has built a new community of over 9,000 women innovators, and has provided awards to 118 women at a total investment value to date of £5.1 million.

Our research with women innovators has highlighted access to funding and finance as the biggest barrier to success. In addition, the lack of visible role models, access to the right networks, and the value of mentors play an important role.

During interviews we heard how a third of women felt their gender had negatively impacted their career. Step-by-step our Women in Innovation programme has acted to address these challenges. We partnered with Getty Images to capture stereotype-shattering images of the winners. These were displayed in a central London gallery and added to Getty’s online image library to stimulate a shift in the media industry’s wider depiction of women innovators.

In 2019 we celebrated the second cohort of Women in Innovation Award winners, who were innovating to tackle the Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges. We also sought to inspire the next generation by addressing the gap of visible role models.

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With women featuring on just 14% of the 900 blue plaques in London, and a similar story elsewhere, we started marking the achievement of the winners by putting up purple plaques in schools across the UK. 18 plaques have been showcased from 2019 to date, with the aim to put up many more.

Innovate UK is continuing to support women-led businesses to access global markets, working closely with international partners and Innovate UK EDGE to deliver a Women in Innovation Global Business Innovation Programme with the Netherlands this year.

In 2021 we ran an innovation loans competition to provide women innovators with access to finance to scale up their businesses and undertake late-stage Research and Development projects.

We also partnered with the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland) as part of its commitment to further increase its impact by working with key regional stakeholders.

Furthermore, we are continuing our work with the investor community and UK Business Angels Association to foster a more gender-diverse investment ecosystem in the UK, and with Founders4Schools to enable our Women in Innovation community to inspire students up and down the country.
We are now proud to be supporting a Women in Innovation community that encompasses over 9,000 members.

Through Innovate UK KTN, we are providing key advice, connections, resources, and an annual programme of events – making community support and networking opportunities more accessible than ever.

Innovate UK EDGE continues to offer business growth support to the award holders through one-to-one coaching and mentoring.

We are delighted to see how previous winners have encouraged our latest award holders to apply, demonstrating the value of peer support and the strength of women uplifting one another.

We know there is more to do to encourage more diverse role models and to continue our outreach to support under-represented communities. Our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion is at its most notable through our Women in Innovation and Young Innovators programmes but it is embedded in all we do at Innovate UK.

We are excited to celebrate our 2021/22 Women in Innovation Award winners and our goal for the future is to encourage many more women into innovation.
Meet the women that are shaping our future across the UK.
Scotland

Jane Stewart
As a Non-Executive Director at Topolytics, Jane Stewart wants to actively encourage more women “to lead, to found and to be the change they wish to see - advancing innovation and forming new initiatives and collaborations to deliver resource sector transformation.”

She explains: “Such action will enable the wider circular economy as we move to Net Zero for the benefit of our people and our planet.”

Topolytics’ vision is to become the leading analytics and insights business for waste producers, the resource recovery industry and government.

Currently, more than 60% of the world’s waste ends its life in landfills, waste dumps or leaks into the environment. The global waste system is complex and inefficient, regarded by the expert team at Topolytics as a data challenge which hampers the ability to recover resources and to reduce carbon emissions from the movement of materials across supply chains.

Topolytics is a leading innovator in the £3.5bn global ‘WasteTech’ industry. It has developed the WasteMap® analytics platform to enable producers, recyclers, brokers and government bodies to map the flow of waste, understand what happens to it and drive the insights necessary to improve the commercial and environmental outcomes.

‘I want to encourage more women to lead and be the change they wish to see in advancing innovation’
North West England

Claire Buckle
Laura Pomfret
Nimrah Munir
Claire Buckle
@ Ability Consultancy NW Ltd

Retired GB Para athlete Claire Buckle set up Ability Consultancy (NW) Ltd in 2019 to help break down the barriers and stigma of disability.

Her business offers a wide range of equality, diversity education and training services, specialising in disability awareness and para sport.

Claire, who grew up with Cerebral Palsy and struggled at school, trained as an athlete and reached the World and European championships. After retiring from para athletics in 2007, she focused on coaching and is now a British Athletics Classifier, supporting disabled athletes and inspiring athletes of the future.

She said: ‘My passion is to ensure that future generations of disabled people have the chance to live, learn and earn like everyone else’

She has developed the Ability App to give people the opportunity to experience disability and its impact in their own surroundings, while providing practical support to encourage accessibility and inclusion.

The app will use virtual, augmented and extended reality technology, enabling the user to experience disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments, as well as experiencing life as a wheelchair user.

“We want to challenge the expectations that society has about disability and show what the 14 million disabled people can achieve given the right opportunities.”

Laura Pomfret
@ Financielle

A desire to help more women take control of their money and be financially well was the inspiration for Laura Pomfret and her sister Holly to set up the online Financielle education platform.

With a background in commercial law, Laura realised that many women needed to become more confident with their money.

She said: “We recognised that women were behind in finance, especially in literacy, pay and wealth and so we’re doing our bit to change financial inequality. Financielle aims to inspire people through education and motivational content, practical money tools and a supportive community.

‘We are playing our part to close the global gender investment gap’

Her innovative financial education platform, which includes a mobile app, brings women together through a financial wellness community, posts informative blogs, links to Financielle’s Instagram posts and offers a useful budget and goal tracker and money wellness plan to encourage women to take practical steps towards financial growth.

As a Women in Innovation Award winner, Laura has been inspired to aim high. “Financielle will be the biggest female finance brand in the world - improving women’s financial literacy and confidence so that they can be financially well.”
Dr Nimrah Munir is the Principal Biomaterials Scientist at QV Bioelectronics, and is a key player in the development of cutting-edge brain cancer therapy technology. She is leading the development of what will be a significant breakthrough in brain tumour treatment for decades - a first of its kind implanted electric field therapy called GRACE.

As one of the inventors of this complex core electrode technology, Nimrah aims to make a huge impact on brain cancer patients’ lives globally.

Dr Munir said: “Glioblastoma is the most common form of primary brain cancer in adults and, despite the availability of intensive treatment options including surgery, chemo and radiotherapy, patients will only survive just over a year on average. Electric fields are a new form of cancer treatment that have already shown great promise in extending patient life when applied from outside of the body. By completely internalising our device, we aim to deliver continuous treatment directly at the tumour site, with the aim of revolutionising outcomes for patients that have been left behind for decades.”

“This award will help us to provide longer, better quality lives for brain tumour patients’ “
North East England

Vijayalakshmi Subramani
Vijayalakshmi Subramani

@ Kerckhoffs Ltd

Vijayalakshmi Subramani (VJ), Co-Founder and a Director of the technologies company Kerckhoffs Ltd, is creating a little digital magic for children with her new innovation - TeenyWeenyVR.

A virtual magician, fun mascots and a friendly puppet will enchant, entertain and inform young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) on the VR-based edutainment platform.

Learning will be made fun through exciting adventures using virtual reality tours of travel attractions around the world. The fully immersive VR experience will also help to reduce children’s phobias and anxiety with its calming content and can help children prepare for travel.

VJ was born in Tamil Nadu, India, and moved to the UK in 2009, graduating from the University of Sunderland as Student of the Year. She developed the concept for TeenyWeenyVR after her six-year-old autistic son’s anxiety episodes were eased through using VR programmes.

She said: “I am a strong believer that science and technology can play a great role in providing a level playing field for all. I am creating TeenyWeenyVR as a sustained business model with an ecosystem of children’s entertainers, SEND children, schools, charities for children and touristic attractions.

Looking ahead after winning the Women in Innovation Award, she says: “I would further work on technological products that are needed in our day-to-day lives.”

‘I believe science and technology provides a level playing field for all’
Northern Ireland

Shannon Beattie
Naomi McGregor
Dr Roisin Molloy
Shannon Beattie’s life was touched at a young age by the cancer diagnosis of a close family member. It was the catalyst that drove her to a career in patient-focused cancer research.

After finishing her PhD in breast cancer research, she joined the ovarian cancer research project in the Patrick G Johnston Centre at Queen’s University Belfast through the Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research (ICURe) programme, which led Shannon to becoming Chief Operating Officer at GenoME Diagnostics.

Built on a decade of scientific research, GenoME Diagnostics are developing OvaME - a potential novel blood test for earlier and more accurate detection of ovarian cancer.

Shannon said: “The OvaME blood test aims to provide earlier and more accurate detection of High Grade Serous Carcinoma, the most common and aggressive form of ovarian cancer, accounting for over 70% of cases. Better detection of this ‘Silent Killer’ could make a significant difference in helping to save the lives of women with ovarian cancer.

“This Women in Innovation project will be used to analyse our patented novel biomarkers to assess their potential use in detecting all types of ovarian cancer. It is also a great platform to highlight the amazing work done by other women in STEM and in Northern Ireland.”
As an aspiring ballet dancer at 14 years old, Naomi McGregor injured her knee and was told she would never dance again.

Naomi McGregor

She channelled her devastating prognosis into a cutting-edge innovation designed to treat elite sports men and women suffering life-altering injuries, with advanced rehabilitation technology to get them back on their feet.

Movetru is wearable technology containing sensors which accurately track the user’s movement. It is the home physio for anyone, anytime, anywhere. Its technology transmits 3D motion to a user’s smartphone to provide them with in-depth analysis from industry professionals. The user is then provided with recommendations specific to their needs to improve performance.

Naomi said: “With my passion for dance, frustration of injury, and background in engineering, I put my specialist knowledge and revolutionary concept forward to create Movetru. It provides a full-body reboot, coupled with individualised information to optimise performance, reduce injuries, and expedite injury recovery.

“We hope that Movetru will revolutionise healthcare for all. The Women in Innovation programme will help to elevate my business and solidify my message that women shouldn’t be restricted into one box.”

‘A woman can be an engineer, a ballerina and an innovative entrepreneurial leader, all at the same time’

Biochemist Dr Roisin Molloy is CEO and co-founder of TriMedika™, an innovative medical technology manufacturer, supplying the most accurate clinical non-contact thermometer to hospitals worldwide.

The TRITEMP non-contact thermometer device is being developed so that it electronically captures and time stamps accurate patient temperature, alongside patient details, with the information being automatically uploaded to a hospital Electronic Medical Records (EMR) database.

This innovation is aimed at improving, capturing and documentation of temperature measurement, making a nurse’s time more efficient and minimising the risk of cross-infection, with a non-contact, plastic-free, environmentally-friendly solution.

The handheld device will communicate its patient data through one of a number of forms of wireless communication, to the hospital EMR. Dr Molloy said: “I am passionate about our mission: ‘To put patient care at the centre of medical innovation.’

“Most hospital thermometers use plastic covers as they need to touch the patient, touch increases the risk of infection and plastic covers increase costs and waste for disposal.”

“We want to take plastic out of our hospitals to improve patient care, reduce costs and protect the environment.”

‘We have made a promise to protect our people and our planet through meaningful technology’
Yorkshire and the Humber

Ali Gordon
Saile Villegas
Jennifer Turner
Ali Gordon  @ Not Usual Ltd

When Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak launched Eat Out to Help Out in 2020, the scheme drove significant revenue into the hospitality sector but was unsustainable by the government. This inspired digital expert Ali Gordon, CEO and founder of Not Usual Ltd, to launch the Eat Out Round About® website and mobile app.

She explained: “My passion comes from my journey with the hospitality sector which has been badly affected throughout the pandemic, further compounded by recent economic challenges facing the UK. During the pandemic, there was a considerable investment into takeaway digital innovation and there is now a need for investment to support communities by attracting people to dine out more often.

“Our digital platform has significant potential to drive revenue into the hospitality sector and economy. We offer a 50% discount on dining out off-peak and our trials generated over a 600% return on investment for the local economy.”

The newly-launched app helps users connect with friends and discover local places to eat out and redeem their vouchers for dining discounts. Vouchers are funded by the business community and subsidised as they source locally and offer employee and customer rewards.

“I want to make a positive contribution to local economies, open new possibilities for businesses, local communities and help the hospitality sector thrive.”

Saile Villegas  @ Seeai

Saile Villegas was raised by a single mother in a town in Mexico, surrounded by cartels and violence.

With limited opportunities for women in tech, she came to Britain to pursue a career in computer science and now leads a team developing an Artificial Intelligence that can detect fractures to the same level as expert radiologists.

As Director and Co-Founder of Seeai, a Medtech company that develops solutions to solve the shortage of radiologists, Saile’s innovation is Fraxpert, which supports healthcare professionals by detecting hard-to-see fractures.

Saile said: “The idea of Fraxpert came to be after being misdiagnosed from an injury and not having access to expert medical care. I wanted to develop a technology that could help reduce health inequalities so that patients can receive the best medical care wherever they are.”

“I plan to use the Women in Innovation Award to acquire capabilities to commercialise my healthcare innovation.

“My long-term ambition is for Fraxpert to be an integral part of the routine practice for fracture diagnosis across Europe. I want to become a role model for young women of ethnic minority backgrounds and inspire them to challenge the status quo.”

‘I want to become a role model for young women of ethnic minority backgrounds and inspire them to challenge the status quo’
Sheffield physiotherapist Jennifer Turner has more than 24 years’ experience working in patient care - both NHS and private practice. But when she realised there was a “gaping hole in our ability to effectively treat the most frail and physically restricted patients on the wards,” she was inspired to design her own piece of medical equipment.

Her innovation is the S-Press - a progressive resistance, portable, leg-strengthening device which can be used by a patient from their bed or chair, to increase their leg muscle strength. The benefits are an improvement in patient confidence and a faster recovery.

Jennifer said: “My passion is exceptional patient care. To enable people to achieve their best physical and emotional outcomes and make a positive and lasting difference to peoples’ lives at a time when they are potentially at their lowest physical and psychological state.”

Elderly hospital patients in particular lose their functional ability very quickly - sometimes up to 20% of their muscle strength in the first week after admission. This can have devastating effects on a person’s physical outcomes and leads to longer periods of rehabilitation.

Jennifer’s innovative S-Press is undergoing evaluation in the NHS for use in the home.

‘My passion is exceptional patient care and I am developing my innovation to improve my clinical area’
Emma Hayhurst

Emma Hayhurst is CEO of Llusern Scientific Ltd and established the company fuelled by “a shared desire to make a difference and connect our research interests with something that is useful.”

“Microbiology underpins everything – all life on earth – and has the power to change the world,” says Emma Hayhurst, CEO of Llusern Scientific.

Llusern specialises in affordable diagnostics - there are huge inequalities in access to good quality diagnostics and I truly believe that it is entirely unacceptable for someone to die from a treatable disease.

“Llusern’s purpose is to give everyone the chance to be diagnosed properly. We have developed a novel molecular diagnostic testing platform suitable for use in ANY setting. This project focuses on a test for Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) - the most common infection globally.”

UTI diagnosis has been generally overlooked, with treatments given on the basis of inaccurate diagnostic tools and antibiotics prescribed unnecessarily, fuelling the spread of antibiotic resistance.

Llusern has developed a quick, affordable and easy test which identifies on-the-spot which bacteria is causing a UTI so that better treatment decisions can be made.

‘Innovation means looking for new ways to solve a problem’

Alice Rackley

Alice Rackley is on a mission to change the way we think about packaging.

As CEO of Polytag, she aims to deliver game-changing digital technology to enable a circular economy for plastic packaging.

A mum of two, she often encourages her children to litter-pick plastic bottles on their local beach in North Wales. She says: “Packaging is not a waste product with no value. It is a natural resource that comes at a cost to the planet. Reducing what we produce, reusing what we have and recycling everything else should be the norm.”

Polytag is developing technology solutions to support the climate emergency. Its platform services enable packaging to be described, tagged and traced through the packaging circular economy. This technology delivers a practical solution that will allow brands to take action and get rich data that has not been seen before, on the post-consumption part of the supply chain cycle.

Polytag enables a truly circular packaging economy by working with all stakeholders, including Government, packaging producers, brands and recyclers, to successfully implement solutions.

Alice added: “I find real satisfaction in knowing that I am building something that can solve an aspect of the pressing climate challenge we all face.

‘I am building something that can solve an aspect of the pressing climate challenge we all face’
West Midlands

Louise Carr-Smith
Food industry expert Louise Carr-Smith has chosen the sweet life for her career path - but with a healthy twist.

The inspiration for her business Clever Sweets Limited was her two small children. When they began demanding sugar-laden lollipops at the supermarket, she took positive action.

Louise came up with a delicious alternative - Lou Lou’s Lollies. Made with real fruit and no artificial additives, the tasty treats are supercharged with goodness – a full daily allowance of vitamin C and tooth-friendly.

Louise said: “My interest in driving health-focused change across the food sector became absolute and I set up the business to make a start.

“I have stayed focused whilst bringing up two children and caring for two elderly parents. Today the passion is greater, as indeed is the need for action!

“My business Clever Sweets Limited has reinvented hard candy to make it good for you. We acted because every 10 minutes a child in the UK is under anaesthetic having a tooth removed. Parents really need better options.

“My next step is to scale up; expand the range and set up an automated factory, assisting in leading the way in the UK food sector. I won’t stop until I reach my goals. My advice is: Be bold, be confident. And don’t look back!”
East Midlands

Helen Xiaoqin Ma
Entrepreneur Helen Xiaoqin Ma founded Anteam during the pandemic after four delivery vans dropped off parcels from the same online retailer in one day.

She was inspired to find a way around excessive deliveries by her young son’s passion with a community of ants in the garden, and began to think of a way to unlock the power in the community to solve climate change.

The result was Anteam (or ‘ant team’): a company with a mission to deliver more logistics capacity through an innovation that unlocks the power of the community.

Helen explained: “The timing of this innovation is critical as there is a rapid increase of consumer shopping online, requiring more parcels to be delivered every day using an already congested road transportation network, whilst creating more air pollution.

“Sustainability, Innovation and Community are the three pillars that Anteam is built upon. We have won an award from the Department for Transport under the Decarbonisation theme. Through the programme, Anteam has demonstrated the enabling Artificial Intelligence technology that can deliver an alternative low-carbon logistics solution to meet the growing market demand.”

Previously, Helen built a business around digital products that predict wind turbine failures, helping to reduce the cost of wind energy. The business gained 40% of the UK offshore market in less than 3 years.

‘Sustainability, Innovation and Community are the three pillars that Anteam is built upon’
Mya Gooding-Springer  @ Swap Shop

Fashion has always been Mya Gooding-Springer’s passion - and this has been channelled into her pre-loved clothing Swap Shop. As CEO and Founder of Swap Shop, The Social Fashion Swapping App, Mya is getting ready to launch her sustainable business so that people can enjoy fashion without it being at the cost of the earth.

She explained: “Globally, we send 92 million tonnes of clothes to landfills each year, which is the equivalent of one truck full of clothing every second. At Swap Shop we aim to drastically decrease this number.

“We believe that sustainable fashion is the future, however it often comes with a hefty price tag that is not accessible to all. We have created Swap Shop to allow users to swap pre-loved occasion items and enjoy fashion trends, without breaking the bank or harming the environment.”

Mya’s vision for Swap Shop is to cultivate a community of fashion lovers who will become more conscious consumers and to encourage them to extend the lifetime of their clothing items.

Her advice to other innovators:

‘If you have an idea that you can’t stop thinking about, that you know will help someone or leave the world in a better place than you found it, then absolutely go for it!’

Zoe Tolkien  @ Advanced Furnace Technology Ltd

Zoe Tolkien is an innovator in her family’s business, Advanced Furnace Technology (AFTech). An engineering and materials science company, based in Cambridge, with a reputation for innovation.

It is developing graphite coating methods with a view to enabling Net Zero 2050. AFTech’s silicon carbide technology is supporting the revolution in power electronics applications, such as electric vehicles, wind turbines and solar panels, making them faster, lighter, more powerful and more affordable.

Zoe is passionate about showcasing AFTech’s technology and expertise and was recently awarded a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship to optimise the thin film ceramic coatings for the silicon carbide semiconductor industry to bring positive change to the environment.

Zoe said: “The Women In Innovation programme is providing funding to develop a novel purification method that will prolong the lifespan of our thin film ceramic coatings and further support ramp-up in the silicon carbide semiconductor sector. The prestige of the scheme will elevate our work to enable exciting research collaborations with academic partners and generate high-quality analytical data.

“I’m looking to learn how to build my company through this innovative project and move into high growth sectors in line with our technical skills and scientific expertise, in the UK and globally”

‘Every innovator’s journey is different, but believe in yourself’
London

Winnie Awa
Claire Barnett
Alexandra Copos de Prada
Elodie Draperi
Reedah El-Saie
Anna Foster
Abi Hannah
Maud Millar
Mira Nameth
Nina Salomons
Savannah de Savary
Andreia Trigo
Consumer tech expert Winnie Awa was motivated to launch her own digital venture - Carra, the world’s first AI-driven and expert-backed 1-on-1 coaching platform - after years of struggling with her own ‘textured hair’ care.

Winnie’s cutting-edge digital innovation offers expert advice, tailored hair care routines and unbiased product recommendations to match individual hair care textures.

Carra offers ‘a personal trainer for your hair’ - The Carra Textured Hair Engine, unique and game-changing technology which brings together beauty and data, keeping the textured hair space up-to-date with personalisation trends.

Winnie, who previously built platforms for world-class companies, said: “For the vast majority of my life, I have struggled with my hair.

Many women with textured hair have the same problem. “As a woman of colour, I am very passionate about pouring everything I have learned into transforming the Textured Hair industry.”

She added: “My vision is to build the number one global platform for the world’s fast growing multicultural population, starting from the UK. This will completely revolutionise the haircare industry by addressing the need for better education about textured hair.”

“Customers told us that they didn’t know how, when and what to use for their hair care. What they wanted was guidance. I launched Carra to fill this gap!”

Claire Barnett is a leader in gender equality, inspiring others to dream big and challenge norms.

As Executive Director of UN Women UK, she campaigns to make gender equality a reality: from grassroots programmes serving the most marginalised women and girls, to helping governments design more gender-equal policies.

She created the Safe Spaces Now project to transform the UK’s public spaces to be safer and more inclusive for women, girls and marginalised people. During the pandemic, she brought together 5,000 women and girls to co-design solutions to combat the sexual harassment that over seven in ten women in the UK have experienced.

As a result, she’s delivered educational training in spaces ranging from corporate workplaces to the world’s first safe spaces music festival. Now, she’s bringing these tools for social good into the metaverse.

Claire is developing immersive training experiences to change behaviour around sexual harassment and violence in public spaces. Learners can interact using virtual and mixed reality in their own space to learn about options for seeking help.

She said: “This is a game-changing solution which brings existing technologies to bear in a new area - one of the most widespread human rights violations.”

‘This behavioural change tool has the potential to prevent violence at an unprecedented scale’
Alexandra Copos de Prada

Moonstar is the engagement and retention mobile app for remote workers.

It was developed by Alexandra Copos de Prada, a former CEO of two companies where initially she struggled with high employee disengagement and turnover. She realised it was essential to give a voice and more opportunities to those who work at the frontline.

She said: “Talking to other 200 CEOs for my research, I found that remote employee’s disengagement was endemic and no tech solutions were available to actively build engagement and retention.”

The Moonstar app was launched in 2020 to create more engaging work experiences and better opportunities for thousands of employees. It delivers company communication, onboarding, training and recognition under one employee-friendly mobile app.

The Women in Innovation Award will allow the platform to be further developed with an Artificial Intelligence system that will predict when an employee becomes disengaged and automatically trigger Nudges to both the employee and manager, prompting them to talk things through.

Alexandra said: “The award validates our effort and those of our clients to improve the opportunities and experience of remote workers everywhere. This grant goes to my amazing team and clients.”

‘My suggestion for aspiring women innovators is to start that wild and exciting project they’ve dreamed of, work hard at it and persevere’

Elodie Draperi

Growing up in French Polynesia with a mother who improved young lives through her work as a judge for juveniles, Elodie Draperi was inspired to help others through her own career.

The GiveVision co-Founder and CEO is dedicated to creating a positive impact through social entrepreneurship and technology.

Sight loss is a growing problem with almost 300 million people globally living with severe eye diseases such as macular degeneration.

GiveVision was established in 2014 with the aim of developing wearables that could transform the lives of people diagnosed with untreatable sight loss.

SightPlus is a medical device that improves sight for the visually impaired. The low vision aid helps them to engage with more daily activities independently.

Elodie said: “SightPlus is a headset with an easy-to-use interface, and with a range of features to adjust the image to their needs. Combined with SightPlus we are developing a remote eye monitoring platform that includes a scanner for retinal imaging that takes pictures of the back of your eyes.

“At GiveVision, we aim to become the global leader in remote eye monitoring and a clinical standard.”

She added: “This is an exciting entrepreneurial journey, with high impact for people living with incurable eye diseases, and has been my greatest professional achievement so far.”

‘This exciting entrepreneurial journey has been my greatest professional achievement so far’
Xplorealms is on a mission to revolutionise the way children learn and retain knowledge, providing free access to immersive and creative education, in every corner of the world.

The multi-award-winning Edtech start-up was designed by mum of three Reedah El-Saie.

She was frustrated with the constant pressure of homework and exams, lack of diversity in the curriculum and children’s addiction to serious gaming with no educational or meaningful content. After a fruitless search for a platform that offered subjects from the British national curriculum, she decided to build one herself.

Xplorealms is building a metaverse of culturally nuanced, immersive, educational mobile games, aligned with the British national curriculum, for 7-14 year olds.

By learning through fun, fast game-play, young people can achieve the equivalent of 12 weeks’ term time learning in just two hours.

Reedah said: “I was keen to build a fun, engaging and immersive app, which accelerated learning, but was aligned with the British national curriculum subjects such as English, Maths, History, Physics and Art, so that it did not create extra work.

“It was important to showcase the contributions of diverse characters to science, arts, philosophy and humanities and design an app that engages with BAME, neurodiverse and vulnerable children.

“We’re excited to build a fun 3D, immersive ‘Climate Game’ to highlight the causes and mitigation required to tackle climate change, as part of the national curriculum.”

“I’m passionate about fostering a love of learning through play!”
Anna Foster
@ E.L.V. DENIM

Anna Foster is a fashion industry pioneer. After 20 years as a stylist, she became aware of the UK’s enormous textile waste and is now calling for others to take more responsibility.

Britain produces 1.1 million tonnes of textile waste, with 350,000 tonnes being sent to landfill, and exporting 750,000 tonnes to Third World countries.

This shocking waste led Anna to launch her business E.L.V. DENIM which only uses post-consumer waste to upcycle into its garments.

“I want to share my knowledge and skill sets to help transform larger businesses working in textiles, so together we can make a change as a country to reduce waste,” she said.

Anna’s innovative business model is to create an accessible sorting infrastructure for textile associations to identify different types of denim in order for the material to be upcycled or recycled.

She will also work further with material scientists to extract elastane from stretch denim to improve textile recycling.

Her long-term goal for E.L.V. DENIM is to establish operations in countries with huge denim waste problems to source vintage denim, produce and distribute in the local area.

She added:

‘Never see obstacles as problems, but simply as challenges. We can change any status quo, if you believe that it’s for the common good’

Abi Hannah
@ Aura Fertility

Starting a family should be the most human experience there is. But for some, it’s not: for those who struggle to conceive, it can instead become a lonely, traumatic and clinical process.

After many years of infertility and nine rounds of IVF, Aura CEO Abi Hannah decided to channel her difficult and often isolating fertility experiences with her passion for women’s wellbeing.

She created Aura Fertility for women experiencing fertility challenges. Aura’s aim is to transform the IVF experience by partnering with clinics and offering a platform that provides pioneering whole-person care for every IVF cycle. The Aura app is an expert-led and evidence-based support platform that guides patients through their fertility treatment journey and provides psychosocial care personalised for every patient.

Abi said: “I’m a big believer in a whole-person approach to health and think that community, resilience and a human-centred approach are essential ingredients for a successful fertility journey, business and life.

‘Aura brings these passion points and values together and we try to embed them in everything we do. Women in tech and FemTech are slowly becoming more mainstream, but there’s still much work to be done to get the message out there.

‘I feel hugely privileged to be able to play a small part in this as well as to represent the one in six women who struggle, often in silence, with fertility issues’
Maud Millar  @ Adapt

Former teacher turned tech CEO Maud Millar has a track record that demonstrates her passion for equality, diversity and inclusion for young people.

Her career has led her from the classrooms of disadvantaged communities in East London, helping students get the grades and the confidence they needed to progress, to becoming an award-winning business leader.

Maud is still actively involved in education, as Chair of Teach First’s Innovation Network and as Co-Founder and CEO of Adapt, an EdTech company with 350,000 student users globally.

Maud Millar

The Adapt smart study planning app for GCSE and A-Level students was launched in 2020 and is now diversifying its tech for the Professional Qualifications market.

Maud explained: “Our innovation is Adapt’s Professional Qualifications app which will provide courses of study on Accounting, Law and other required CPD courses for specific companies and industries. A matching dynamic app will report to leaders and mentors where their trainees are confident and where they are struggling.

“This will allow companies to monitor much more successfully the progress of young lawyers, accountants and bankers, helping to ensure more trainees successfully graduate into companies in the midst of an ongoing “war for talent.”

We want to open doors for women and young people leaving university in the aftermath of the pandemic, in particular, giving those from disadvantaged backgrounds the helping hand they need for professional success’

Mira Nameth  @ Biophilica Ltd

Designer Mira Nameth’s motivation for her breakthrough innovation was her daughter.

“The choice to bring a child into the world is not an easy one given climate change projections. I wanted to be part of the solution,” she says.

She was inspired to create Treekind®, an alternative to leather, made with green waste from gardens including leaves, twigs and grass. It is completely free of petrochemicals and toxins, low resource, and compostable and recyclable.

Mira Nameth

Mira explained “With demand for raw materials expected to triple by 2050, we urgently need to replace problematic raw materials used for leather, polyurethane and PVC, with regenerative non-toxic ones, and rethink our waste strategies so these materials can break down in nature and reduce the amount going to landfill.”

Her vision for Biophilica is to develop a portfolio of sustainable materials to have a marked impact on greenhouse gas reduction.

Mira is encouraged that mainstream consumers and the largest companies in the world recognise the necessity to rapidly transition to sustainable materials. Her work has already attracted strong interest from luxury, classic and casual brands.

I wanted to be part of the solution to climate change’
**Nina Salomons**

Using virtual reality software for mental health therapy is the brainchild of Nina Salomons, developed during the pandemic to help therapists and their clients who were struggling with remote sessions.

Her groundbreaking Anomie (I-know-me) software is aimed at therapy, coaching and teaching using virtual reality (VR). Anomie’s immersive technologies help users express and understand how they feel by drawing and creating scenes in a virtual environment. Mental health support can be accessed during VR therapy sessions with a live therapist.

Nina’s innovation originated from her VR therapy work in UK prisons to improve inmates’ wellbeing and help reduce reoffending rates.

She said: “I realised this concept would not only help prisoners, but also therapists struggling with 2D digital therapeutics. After testing it during lockdown, I knew the world needed it.”

Dutch Nina, now based in London, hopes that Anomie will be used for various forms of therapies, customised to suit clients’ needs. “Ultimately I hope to integrate brain-to-computer interfaces with Artificial Intelligence to enable users to create scenarios in real-time,” she added.

CEO and Co-Founder Nina feels honoured to have won a Women in Innovation award. “Not only does it make me feel like I am creating value for society, but that I can be a role model for other people like myself,” she said.

‘It proves that I’m doing something truly innovative with lasting impact’

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**Savannah de Savary**

After working in real estate management in New York, Savannah de Savary founded Built-ID at the age of 23.

Built-ID is a social impact tech company, focused on building better, more sustainable places. It connects diverse demographic groups and its products support collaboration between renewable energy project decision-makers and communities.

Savannah has developed an award-winning community engagement platform, Give My View; which allows hard-to-reach people, who are often passionate about climate action, to become a core part of the change-making process to make the development of the built environment more inclusive and sustainable. Innovative community activation tools and game mechanics are used to incentivise people.

Savannah said: “The idea is to create accessible engagement software that dynamically facilitates learning.

“We urgently need to reduce the UK’s carbon footprint and to empower younger generations to help shape the built environment they will inherit. I believe the diverse majority, including younger people, remain silent not out of apathy but due to a sense of disenfranchisement from decision-making.

“Increased understanding and engagement is critical to the future of our marine wildlife and sustainably meeting UK energy requirements. Without it, you can’t inspire action that protects the environment and reduces the disconnect between daily activities and long-term climate action goals.”

‘Our vision is for Built-ID to become a global tech-for-good leader’

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Women in Innovation

Going beyond boundaries
Andreia Trigo
@ Enhanced Fertility

Enhanced Fertility was born from nurse Andreia Trigo’s determination to bring purpose to her own diagnosis of infertility, while helping others along the way.

Andreia came to London from Portugal in 2012 to pursue a medical career and she is now the Founder and CEO of Enhanced Fertility software, making personalised fertility care accessible to all. Patients complete a fertility assessment, at-home testing and receive a personalised report. The software also informs doctors about their patients’ fertility health data.

Andreia was diagnosed with infertility at 17 years old. She struggled to cope with the lifelong losses of infertility and questioned her womanhood and purpose. Twenty years later, she has created Enhanced Fertility to give back to society and to feel fulfilled.

She says: “My goal is to help people be diagnosed sooner and be referred to fertility specialists that can help them and create a personalised treatment plan that increases their chances of conception.”

“We are already helping people through at-home hormone tests and an online validated assessment of fertility risk factors.”

“The Women in Innovation grant is going to help us develop the Doctor’s Portal, where clinicians can decide which treatment is most likely to result in pregnancy and live birth for each specific patient. We are bringing predictive analytics to the consultation room and making personalised medicine available to all patients trying to conceive.”

‘My goal is to help people be diagnosed sooner and be referred to fertility specialists to increase their chances of conception’
South East England

Carolina Avellaneda
Leslie Gaston-Bird
Kerryne Krause
Amy Langfield
Louise Towler
Dr Anna Vartapetianc
Carolina Avellaneda  @ BubbleLife

Biologist and innovator Carolina Avellaneda created BubbleLife to develop a biodegradable alternative to plastic packaging for liquid toiletries, and she has big ambitions.

“With BubbleLife, I want to replace all the plastic packaging for liquid toiletries in our households and the hospitality sector. This change could displace 5,000 tonnes of plastic packaging waste per year.

“Personally, I want to be an example for women over 40, showing that we can succeed in changing careers, finding new opportunities and feeling that it is never too late to create and innovate.”

Colombian-born Carolina’s BubbleLife journey started after talking with her partner Jon about the number of plastic bottles that were used in bathrooms in the UK - and what could be done to reduce this plastic waste problem. She also wanted to find a way of stopping the waste caused by not being able to get all the soap out of the bottle.

She was disconcerted to find that many beauty products used plastics that are not widely recycled - resulting in most of these containers ending in landfill.

After winning the Women in Innovation Award, Carolina aims to show potential investors: “The advantages that BubbleLife can provide to make business environmentally responsible, eliminating plastic waste and changing people’s behaviour towards more conscious consumption habits.

‘Perseverance, trust yourself, believe in your idea!’

Leslie Gaston-Bird  @ Mix Messiah Productions

Leslie Gaston-Bird (CAS, MPSE, AMPS) started playing classical piano at a young age and excelled at maths and sciences. She combined her talents to become a re-recording mixer and sound editor specialising in Film and TV features as well as podcasts.

Her experience as an audio engineer has given Leslie a desire to apply her skills as an educator and technician to provide access to the tools for immersive sound content creation to women and under-represented groups.

She said: “As we begin to see the growing popularity of immersive audio, and usually as the only woman or person of colour in the room, I would like to ensure that we have a seat at the table for this economically strong and burgeoning technology. It will create jobs in sound for film and television, video games, augmented and virtual reality, and for podcasts.

“I would like to ensure that we have a seat at the table for this economically strong and burgeoning technology.”

She is the author of Women in Audio (2019, Routledge), Math Fundamentals for Audio (2020, A-R Editions), a voting member of the Recording Academy (‘The Grammys’®) and was Associate Professor of Recording Arts at the University of Colorado Denver (2005-2018).
Entrepreneur Kerryne Krause calls herself The Chief Excitement Officer. Her passion for people, innovation and technology led her to develop a world-first product with the healing touch.

Kerryne Krause

@ EYESLICES UK LTD

Her company iSlices Innovations has created global brands from its unique cryogel polymer technology in the skincare, pharmacy and medi-aesthetics industries. Building on her successes in the cosmetic industry, which started with eyeSlices® launched in South Africa in 2006, the Cryogel dermal delivery system has taken 10 years to develop. The result is a cooling, non-toxic, solid gel dermal delivery product which speeds the healing process for patients with skin wounds.

Kerryne said: “As an innovator I identify gaps in the market and apply novel technology to fill those gaps. Our technology was always developed with burns and wound care in mind and there are very few effective products on the market that treat life-threatening wounds. We have seen amazing results on full healing of leg ulcers in our trials.”

Located in south-east England, the company’s cosmetic industry products have won Top Technology 100 awards and been exported around the world.

She said: “The Women in Innovation programme allows us to fund the next stage of our journey to bring a life-changing innovation to patients.”

‘As an innovator, I identify gaps in the market and apply novel technology to fill them’

Amy Langfield’s daughter Iris had severe allergies from birth and she found there were few alternative feeding options - the only choices were highly synthetic and tasted unpleasant.

Amy Langfield

@ Grow With Iris

As a concerned mum, she was driven to develop her own plant-based infant formula and toddler follow-on drink which is set to be launched with support and mentoring from the Women in Innovation Award.

She said: “The allergy community is at the heart of the product and my aim and passion is to provide parents with a positive choice, allowing them to give their child a clean, sustainable, plant-based drink that will provide all the essential nutrition they need to grow.”

Amy’s innovation lies within the groundbreaking protein source - peas are used for high plant-based protein content. The product will be packaged in fully recyclable pouch format.

Amy said: “As a small business taking on a big world of infant and toddler feeding, I feel supported and validated as an award winner. “Long term, the dream would be to produce our own raw materials, supporting UK-based farmers and to have our own manufacturing plant.”

‘The allergy community is at the heart of the product and my aim and passion is to provide parents with a positive choice that they can have confidence in’
Women in Innovation Going beyond boundaries

Louise Towler @ Indigo Tree Digital

Technical entrepreneur Louise Towler has her finger on the pulse of progress with her innovative platform designed to empower WordPress website content editors.

The former software and website developer is the Founder and Managing Director of Indigo Tree, a web design and development agency which is well-regarded as one of the leading WordPress agencies.

She designed the new platform in response to web content editors complaining they were struggling with complicated tools and unintuitive systems which made websites hard to manage and maintain.

Her innovation enables clients to make educated changes to the content of their site to prevent accessibility issues before they even occur. The latest technologies are used to compress and optimise media and reduce page weight. It also offers real-time reporting to the content editor on the resulting CO2 savings.

Louise said “I am delighted to be a Women in Innovation winner - the mentoring will help me to develop my confidence as the leader of Indigo Tree as we grow to ensure the direction and strategy supports my ambition. “My vision for Indigo Tree is to be the leading SME-focused WordPress agency in the UK, regarded as experts in website accessibility and reducing the impact of websites on the environment.”

Dr Anna Vartapetiance @ Securium LTD

Dr Anna Vartapetiance describes herself as “a dyslexic female tech entrepreneur and innovator with mixed backgrounds.”

With a great fascination for science and technology from childhood and a wish to help others and change lives, after finishing a PhD in Computer Science, Anna joined forces with her university supervisor, Dr Lee Gillam, to create a Tech-for-Good company, Securium (which means a “Secure and safe place”).

“Securium is a multi-award winning cyber intelligence company providing online safety technologies to protect vulnerable businesses and individuals, especially children, from online harm such as grooming, exploitation, and hate speech.”

Securium focuses on its expertise, particularly in Natural Language Processing, to provide solutions that will help both to prevent and detect various online harms, many of which have accelerated during the pandemic.

Discussing what separates them from other solutions, Anna said “Image/video-based solutions, particularly in regards to grooming and exploitation of children, can only detect the problem. There is always a conversation that precedes those images and videos.

‘Through our innovative solutions, we enable early identification of risky behaviours. As result, we can not only detect but also prevent harm’

On winning her Women in Innovation award, Anna said: “It is not only an honour but a big responsibility to represent women in innovation and STEM.”
South West England

Philippa Doyle
Victoria Forrest
Ying Lia Li
Philippa Doyle
@ The Bshirt

Business woman and mum of two Philippa Doyle is co-founder of the award-winning, sustainable breastfeeding clothing brand The Bshirt.

Believing in a better future for fashion, she found a new business perspective after having her children. Motherhood provided the perfect incubator for a new venture and Philippa, with Co-Founder Lisa Lessware, launched an ethical and sustainable breastfeeding clothing brand in 2017.

Devon-based Philippa said: “Running a business that supported breastfeeding mothers was something I felt very passionate about. I felt I could really make a difference to thousands of women in similar circumstances.

“Our breastfeeding clothes are designed to be sustainable - they are premium quality garments made with organic cotton, in classic colours that never go out of fashion.”

The Bshirt’s innovation is a circular business model introducing a clothing rental service for bump, breastfeeding and beyond. Clothing made from recycled materials will be available for rent so that women can access sustainable clothes, in the right size, during each stage of their journey of motherhood. Maternity and breastfeeding clothes will be repaired when possible and, when they are worn out, they will be recycled.

‘Winning this award feels like the culmination of my journey as an entrepreneur and as a mother’
Award-winning book designer Victoria Forrest’s work blurs the boundaries between real and virtual formats. She has produced high-quality conceptual books and brand designs for artists, photographers and publishers for the last 15 years.

Victoria Forrest
@ VIKA Books

She says: “The way we read has changed. Every day we travel through a range of multimedia: videos, podcasts, documentaries, websites and the information is disconnected. I want to change that by reconnecting everything we learn and embedding digital content into my ‘Connected Books’.

After successfully using sign language to communicate with her hearing son from an early age, Victoria created ‘Where is the bird?’ the first augmented reality book to inspire the use of British Sign Language in deaf and hearing families. Each page contains an illustration that triggers augmented reality animations together with a video demonstrating the sign language for that word.

Sign language has been excluded from mainstream publishing because it is a moving language, but Victoria’s patent pending technology will enable sign language editions to be published.

She explained: “Sign language is a rich expressive language. I want to raise awareness of deaf languages and culture to improve integration between deaf and hearing communities. The book’s videos will bring a static silent page to life, allowing deaf and hearing children to become more engaged with books and reading.”

‘A static silent page springs to life, inspiring all children to play in British Sign Language’

Ying Lia Li
@ Zero Point Motion

Motion tracking and navigation are set for a new direction with Zero Point Motion’s innovative hardware solutions.

Company Founder and CEO Ying Lia Li knew there was a huge void in the current market where the sensors in your car or smartphone generate too much positioning error to be useful when global navigation satellite signals like GPS are weakened, preventing autonomous and indoor positioning. Although high performance inertial sensors exist in aeroplanes or spacecraft, they cost over £10k and are too chunky for drones or consumer devices.

She said: “GPS isn’t available indoors, and its signal strength is like looking at a lightbulb 20,000km away.”

‘I knew that to improve navigation and stabilisation, the market needs new sensor technology, but still at chip-scale size’

Her solution was for Zero Point Motion to redefine the limits of inertial sensors with photonics, based on research that led to the detection of gravitational waves.

Lia was born in China and immigrated to the UK so her parents could pursue PhDs. Following in their footsteps, she has transitioned from academia into industry, winning the Institute of Physics Clifford Paterson Prize in the process.

She said: “Our inertial sensors will be 100 times more sensitive than ones inside your phone. Imagine ultra responsive AR/VR headsets, and increased precision in robotics.”
Glossary

Biotechnology
Emma Hayhurst

Built Environment
Savannah de Savary

Design
Anna Foster

Digital & Creative
Claire Buckle
Victoria Forrest
Ali Gordon
Vijayalakshmi Subramani
Louise Towler

Electronics sensors & photonics
Ying Lia Li

Food
Louise Carr-Smith
Amy Langfield

Health
Shannon Beattie
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Abi Hannah
Naomi McGregor
Dr Roisin Molloy
Nimrah Munir
Nina Salomons
Andreia Trigo
Jennifer Turner
Saile Villegas

Human rights
Claire Barnett

Materials
Kerryne Krause
Mira Nameth
Zoe Tolkien

Media and Entertainment
Leslie Gaston-Bird

Sustainability & Circular Economy
Carolina Avellaneda
Philippa Doyle
Mya Gooding-Springer
Alice Rackley
Jane Stewart

Information & Communications Technology
Winnie Awa
Alexandra Copos de Prada
Reedah El-Saie
Maud Millar
Laura Pomfret
Dr Anna Vartapetiance

Transport
Helen Xiaojin Ma
Find out more and get involved:
ktn-uk.org/programme/women-in-innovation