



The Academic Woman



"By creating space and flipping the script, we opened pathways for equity to grow."
— Fiona McGonigle, Founder, We Are GLOBAL Women

Your story



To submit content to the website or to be featured in our magazine, please send your copy and any attachments to:
anatu@theacademicwoman.co.uk

All women working in higher education are welcome to share their stories, experiences and research by granting or requesting a feature to be done on them or writing as contributors. We also welcome contributions on health & wellness.

Visit theacademicwoman.co.uk for more details.

*The mission of
The Academic
Woman is to
shine a spotlight
on women
in higher
education by
championing
recognition,
well-being and
positive
action for
greater female
empowerment.*

Editor-in-Chief

Dr Anatu Mahama

Editorial support

*Hafsah Zahoor
Cody Forster*

Design

*Alexandra Nae
Moses Somolu*

To sponsor/advertise

Please contact us on:

Tel: 07469933956

Email: anatu@theacademicwoman.co.uk

For submissions and contributions,
please visit theacademicwoman.co.uk.

For submission guidelines contact us:

Email: anatu@theacademicwoman.co.uk

To read our back issues,

Please visit us at: theacademicwoman.co.uk



Contents

Editorial page	3
Contents	4
Editor's letter	5
Word from Fiona McGonigle – Founder, We Are GLOBAL Women (WAGW)	6
Co-Creating Equity Through Voice, Vision & Action: Reflections from the We Are GLOBAL Women Conference 2025	8
Women in Public Services Research: Power, Purpose & Progress	14
Professor Emma Williams Professor Sam Lundrigan Associate Professor Dr Lauren Godier-McBard Associate Professor Melanie Boyce	
Spotlight Speaker – Jo Living Secrets from the poker table that will help you raise your game	16
Mind Meets Market	20
Professor Sian Moore, Chair Natalie Phillips, Head of Content & Business Development Camilla Nicholl Associate Professor Shabnam Sadeghi Esfahlani Andy Brady	
Connecting Worlds Research without limits, impact without borders	24
Professor Laurie Butler Professor Catherine Lee MBE Dr Dannielle Green Professor Shahina Pardhan OBE	
The Equity Exchange: Unfiltered, Unscripted & Mic-Drops – Flipping the Script	26
Chair - Fiona McGonigle Olu Orugboh Dr. Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE Nicola Grant Shelley Coleman-Marsh Lee Chambers Lord Wesley Pestano Jeremy Stockdale Philip Marsh	
Spotlight Speaker – Dr. Magdalena Zawisza	30
Why Sexism is Bad for Business, Brains, and Boys (Not Just Women)	
We Are – Empowering Futures: Education, Skills, and the Path to Gender Equity	34
Fiona McGonigle, Chair Anne Bailey Professor Marie-Pierre Moreau Melissa Lee Dr. Magdalena Zawisza	



Editor's Letter

To a more equitable future! - Co-Creating Equity Through Voice, Vision & Action

On June 17th, the Cambridge campus of Anglia Ruskin University transformed into a hub for change. The We Are GLOBAL Women Conference 2025 was more than just another discussion on gender equality; it was a dynamic illustration of the impact that occurs when varied perspectives converge across different sectors, experiences, and beliefs to challenge norms and forge innovative paths ahead. The atmosphere in the venue was palpable, with discussions being candid and enlightening, and the central message clear: equity is a collective struggle; we simply engage in it from different angles. The conference welcomed over 150 attendees dedicated to advancing progress through collaboration, bravery, and curiosity. From trailblazing researchers in public services to innovative entrepreneurs redefining corporate leadership with strategy and flair, and academics and visionaries forming unexpected alliances, each session was infused with intention. What resonated most was the readiness to embrace discomfort. Speakers shared not only polished remarks but also profound truths. Challenging ones. Personal ones. Essential ones. Whether it was Lee Chambers emphasising that inclusion begins when ego diminishes, or Dr. Magdalena Zawisza revealing that sexism is a shared burden rather than solely a women's issue, each moment underscored a crucial truth: achieving gender equity is not solely the responsibility of women. It involves everyone.

The intense Equity Exchange Debate underscored this point. Panelists and audience members alike revealed not just systemic shortcomings, but also the subtle, ingrained narratives we all harbour. Though it wasn't always easy to hear, it was authentic and impactful. At its core, the conference transcended mere dialogue. It fostered connections. Between individuals and industries, theory and practice, policy and real-world application. Between aspiration and action. We heard urgent calls to move beyond superficial DEI initiatives, emphasising the need to embrace diversity as a profound cultural commitment rather than just a checklist. We understood innovation as more than a trendy term, viewing it as a connector, bringing lived experiences into the fold of institutional transformation. We were reminded that allyship is not just about who leads the conversation, but also about who attentively listens, and what actions they choose to undertake afterward.

This edition of The Academic Woman is dedicated to the 'We Are GLOBAL conference'. It serves as both a reflection of and a call to action. It encapsulates the focal points, revelations, and challenges that rendered this year's conference pressing and essential. As Fiona, the founder of We Are GLOBAL, expressed in her concluding remarks, this marks a start rather than a finish. The journey moves forward, with the upcoming chapter set to broaden the dialogue even further through a specialised men's series cantered on conversation, accountability, and collective equity-building. Therefore, I encourage you to delve deeper, not just to gain knowledge, but to find motivation. Let these voices inspire you, challenge you, and ultimately energise you to take action, because the quest for equity is not pursued in isolation. It is a collective effort grounded in solidarity.

Word From Founder



Fiona McGonigle

*Business Engagement and Innovation Lead, Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)
Founder, We Are GLOBAL Women | Chair, Agri-Food Tech &
Sustainability Consortium | Speaker & Policy Contributor*

“

This House Believes That Gender Equity is Everyone's Battle — But We're Fighting on Different Fronts.

”

Fiona is a recognised leader in skills policy, sustainable development, workforce transformation and gender equity. With a diverse career spanning Regional Government, further and higher education, and consultancy, Fiona has consistently championed systems-level change through strategic partnerships, policy influence, and global advocacy, building inclusive, future-ready systems that unlock human capital and empower underrepresented groups.

As the Business Engagement and Innovation Lead at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), she played a pivotal role in developing Industry and stakeholder partnerships for the new £80 million University Quarter at ARU Peterborough. Her role places her at the heart of industry collaboration, economic growth, workforce development, and Green Skills innovation—positioning the region as a leader in sustainable talent development.

A passionate advocate for equity and inclusion, Fiona is the Founder of We Are GLOBAL Women, a cross-sector platform advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals through the lenses of gender equality, sustainability, and social impact. In June 2025, she hosted the inaugural We Are GLOBAL Women Conference in Cambridge, a landmark event uniting 150+ delegates and nearly 30 thought leaders. The flagship debate, “The Equity Exchange: Unfiltered, Unscripted & Mic-Drops – Flipping the Script!”, challenged conventional narratives by having men and women speak from each other's lived perspectives—a powerful moment that embodied Fiona's commitment to transformative dialogue. Where gender perspectives were challenged and reimaged under the motion: “This House Believes That Gender Equity is Everyone's Battle — But We're Fighting on Different Fronts.”

Her impact spans boardrooms and global stages. Fiona has served on the Women on Boards Policy Think Tank, been a delegate to CSW69 with UN Women UK, and is the Chair of the Employment Pillar for the Cambridge Homelessness Charter, where she is co-leading a multi-agency pilot with CRISIS, DWP, and local authorities. She is also the founder and chair of the Agri-Food Tech & Sustainability Consortium, launched at COP26 and now comprising over 230 members focused on the Green Economy. As Chair of the newly formed UKBRDC Universities Group - An Employment Park with multiple phases, expected to deliver 15,000 jobs in Battery Research, and the Clean Energy Sector.

Previously, she chaired the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Employment & Skills Board and represented the U9 Universities on the South East LEP Skills Board. Her contributions to national business and education policy include her roles with the Chartered Association of Business Schools and the Help to Grow Alumni Network of SMEs.

She is also one of the leads for the Government's Help to Grow: Management Programme at ARU, where she leads Industry Engagement, Marketing, Recruitment, and the Alumni Network. Fiona has successfully secured over £500,000 in income from 7 Cohorts 9 Cohorts and over £800,000.

Fiona's insights have been featured in the Research & Development Society's blog in preparation for the new UK National Industrial Strategy published in June 2025. “From Classroom to Boardroom”, where she examined the gender imbalance across industrial sectors and called for systemic reforms in skills and workforce policy. She has been a speaker at major events including Baroness Karren Brady's Women in Business & Technology Show, National Start-Up Week, the Dept for Education (DfE) National Conferences and International Conference for Green Skills. She is also a published contributor to the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) Global Employability Book, and a frequent judge on entrepreneurship and innovation panels including developing the Youngtrepreneur, Lions' Den, and more recently judge for the Get Set Grow Pitch in Essex.

Winner of Business in the Community Award for 3 consecutive years at the HuntsPost Awards. Endorsed by the International Human Rights Commission as one of the “50 Global Women to Reckon With for 2025”. Fiona continues to shape inclusive, bold futures across sectors and geographies. Her career is not just defined by advocacy—but by action, outcomes, and an unrelenting commitment to equity, collaboration, and systems change.

Her influence has reached international delegations from China, Brussels, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and Germany. Whether shaping skills policy post-COVID, chairing sustainability panels, or mentoring emerging leaders, Fiona's mission is clear: to unlock human potential, drive inclusive growth, and build a better future together.

Co-Creating Equity Through Voice, Vision & Action Equity is Everyone’s Battle – We Just Fight on Different Fronts!

Reflections from the We Are GLOBAL Women Conference 2025

Anglia Ruskin University’s Cambridge campus came alive on June 17th with the **We Are GLOBAL Women Conference**, a powerful gathering exploring gender equity, innovation, allyship, and the future of inclusive leadership. Founded and led by **Fiona McGonigle**, ARU’s Business Engagement and Innovation Lead, the event brought together diverse voices from across public services, education, business, and the creative industries to challenge assumptions and drive collective change. From personal stories to global systems thinking, the conference proved that while the battle for equity is shared, the experiences and barriers we face are often different.

Opening Remarks: Building Equity Through Unity

Fiona McGonigle welcomed over 150 delegates with a message of purpose and momentum. As founder of We Are GLOBAL Women, she called for action rooted in collaboration and curiosity, laying the foundations for a day built on voice, vision, and vulnerability. Her framing set the stage: this was not only a conversation about women, but a commitment to progress with both men and women working together.

Women in Public Services Research – Power, Purpose & Progress

This equal exchange of ideas addressed the complex and deeply rooted challenges facing women in uniformed public services.

Professor Emma Williams shared that “a culture that supports silencing within the industries” still exists and called for confronting the systems that reward masculine behaviours while sidelining others.

Professor Sam Lundrigan reinforced this, stating: “Diversity is not a tick-box exercise — we have to move with them.”

Dr Lauren Godier-McBard called out that it’s not about identifying problems, but finding solutions, pointing to cultural issues that run deep.

Dr Melanie Boyce shared insights on community-led justice, reminding us that *allyship must begin at the top*.

Together, they demanded a shift from performance to practice, from policy to partnership.

Speaker Spotlight: Jo Living – From Poker to Power Plays

Entrepreneur Jo Living shared her journey through grief, burnout, and reinvention. Drawing lessons from the poker table, she taught the audience how confidence and strategic risk can reshape how women navigate business.

Her advice? “Own space, control pace, own the conversation.”

And with humour: “Poker taught me judo.”

She’s the founder of Aces High, a training approach using poker to sharpen leadership and negotiation skills — a tool she believes can open boardroom doors for women.

Unlocking Innovation Through Knowledge - Mind Meets Market

This interdisciplinary panel, chaired by **Professor Sian Moore**, showcased the synergy between academia and industry.

Natalie Phillips urged universities to support theatres and cultural institutions: “We need to bring in academics to help implement new structures to make our organisation more dynamic.”

Camilla Nichol, CEO of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, highlighted the power of technology and collaboration: “Tech is how we interrogate sites when we aren’t there.”

Dr Shabnam Sadeghi emphasised real-world learning: “Women need to feel comfortable going out and asking what organisations can do for them.”

Andy Brady called for deeper engagement with charities and the third sector: “Work-based learning and transferable skills must be embedded in our academic experience.”

Together, the panel demonstrated how **knowledge becomes a tool for innovation when shared across boundaries** — and when educators actively connect with the evolving needs of business and society.

Keynote: A Call for Allyship – Lee Chambers

Lee Chambers, founder of Male Allies UK, shared a deeply personal and analytical perspective on equity. He challenged assumptions with honesty: “Thinking you’re an inclusive leader is often the biggest barrier to being one.”

His message: equity benefits all genders, and inclusion is not a moral checkbox, but a competitive and compassionate advantage. While his insights were valuable, the day’s broader message reminded attendees that allyship is shared — and requires everyone at the table.

Connecting Worlds – Research Without Limits, Impact Without Borders

Led by **Professor Laurie Butler**, this session spotlighted research excellence at ARU and how lived experience and community insight shape meaningful impact.

Professor Catherine Lee MBE shared her journey through Section 28 to becoming a visible LGBTQ+ leader in higher education:

“ARU was the first place I could be my authentic self — it was liberating.”

Dr Dannielle Green described influencing global plastics policy through partnerships:

“Forming relationships across boundaries can solve problems.”

Professor Shahina Pardhan OBE inspired the audience with her commitment to connecting research with underserved communities and bridging global barriers.

Their shared message: **break down silos, demystify research, and bring real people into the process**, not just as subjects, but as partners.

The Equity Exchange Debate: Flipping the Script

This standout session, chaired by Fiona McGonigle, took a bold and unscripted approach to challenge ingrained narratives around gender. Fiona opened with the provocation:

“This house believes that gender equity is everyone’s battle — but we are fighting on different fronts.”

What followed was a fierce, reflective, and at times deeply emotional exchange as four women and four men went head-to-head in a spirited debate, engaging both the panellists and the audience.

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE called for action beyond policy: “There should be no retribution for men’s behaviour — we need to call it out and challenge it, constantly.”

Olu Orugboh challenged organisations to stop relying on short-term promises: “We need to shift DEI from moral obligation to economic imperative — only then will it be sustainable.”

Shelley Coleman-Marsh reflected on personal loss and knowledge-sharing: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Nicola Grant urged collective ownership and cultural change: “We hold on to roles out of fear — but small fires everywhere make a difference.”

Lee Chambers reinforced the debate’s theme with conviction: “We need to step into each other’s shoes and do more things together — collective responsibility is the only way forward.”

Jeremy Stockdale: “As men, we need to unlearn bad practices and see the world through different eyes.”

Philip Marsh: “Men need to stand as authentic leaders. We all have a role in creating workplaces where assertiveness is encouraged, respected, and equal.”

Lord Wesley Pestano: “World leaders have to be diversified — without it, we’ll keep debating the same problems.”

Audience voices added depth — raising concerns about equity at home, trust in men as caregivers, fear of saying the wrong thing, and how performative DEI creates more burnout than belonging. The panel showed clearly that the path to equity is not linear, nor identical — but **we are all accountable for walking it together**.

Speaker Spotlight: Dr Magdalena Zawisza – Why Sexism is Bad for Business, Brains, and Boys (Not Just Women)

Dr Magdalena Zawisza delivered a compelling session grounded in findings from the world’s largest gender study — a 62-country meta-analysis — revealing how sexism harms not just women, but entire societies. Her research demonstrated that gender inequality is linked to negative health, economic, and psychological outcomes for all.

She explored how both benevolent and hostile sexism reinforce harmful stereotypes and structures. Her presentation also highlighted how artificial intelligence systems, trained on historical data, often replicate masculine biases, embedding inequality in digital platforms and decision-making tools.

Dr Zawisza closed with a call for action: “Anti-sexism leads to higher health and economic benefits. Overall, we are all happier.”

Empowering Futures – Education, Skills, and the Path to Gender Equity

Chaired by **Fiona McGonigle**, this final panel brought the day full circle. Framed around the idea that we are all change-makers, but on different journeys. Fiona invited the panellists to reflect on early education, the labour market, and the invisible forces shaping women’s choices and chances.

Melissa Lee began: “Home education is the first step to change.” She encouraged early awareness of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

Anne Bailey added: “Girls should believe that these industries want them.” She called for more paid internships and employer engagement.

Professor Marie-Pierre Moreau highlighted the hidden curriculum: “Even when women are encouraged, men are still preferred. That’s invisible work.”

Dr Magdalena Zawisza, returning to the stage, closed with clarity: “We need to shine a light onto the blindness — sexism doesn’t go away because we ignore it.”

Closing Remarks: Step Forward, Together

Fiona McGonigle closed the conference by thanking speakers, students, and guests for their honesty, courage and commitment. The call to action was clear: this event is a launchpad, not a finale. We must step into each other’s shoes, carry forward the ideas shared, and keep building a world where gender equity isn’t a topic — it’s a reality.

She also left delegates with a powerful teaser: the next event will flip the script again — launching a dedicated men’s series focused on dialogue, understanding, and the shared responsibility of balancing equity for all.

Co-Creating Equity Through Voice, Vision & Action: Reflections from the We Are GLOBAL Women Conference 2025.





Faye Allen

Faye Allen is a highly experienced Chartered Quantity Surveyor with over 30 years in the construction industry. She spent the first two decades of her career working for major contractors, leading large commercial teams and delivering multimillion-pound projects across a wide range of sectors, including residential, commercial, education, healthcare, aviation, shipbuilding, power plants, and sports infrastructure.

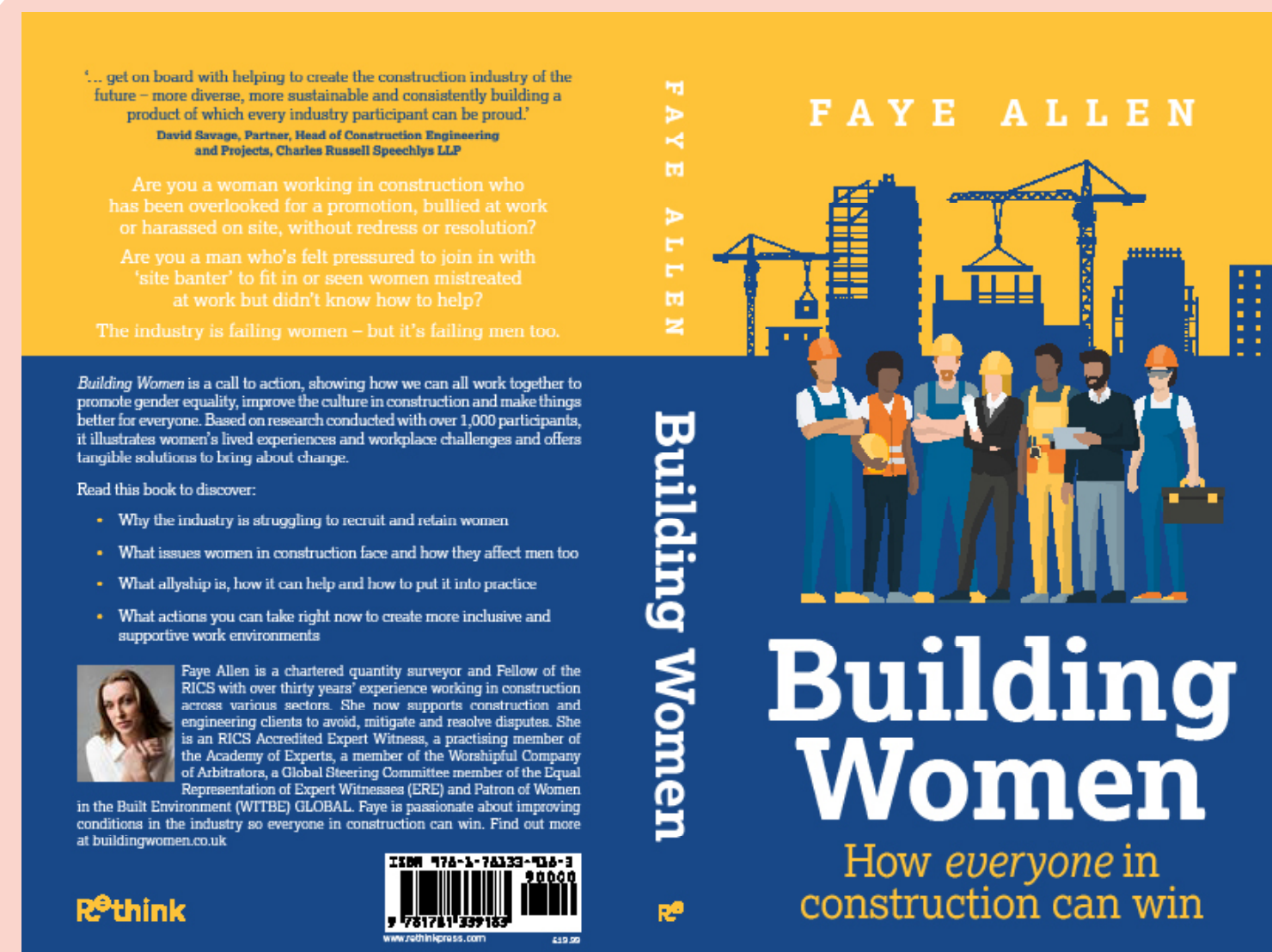
Now working in the dispute resolution arena, Faye advises both contractor and client organisations on avoiding, mitigating, and resolving complex construction and engineering disputes. She regularly supports domestic and international clients through formal dispute processes, drawing on her extensive on-site and strategic experience.

Faye is a recognised expert witness, accredited by both the Academy of Experts and RICS. She has provided expert evidence in high-profile, high-value cases and has been cross-examined in the UK's Technology and Construction Court. Her combined legal training and hands-on industry experience give her a sharp ability to analyse, value, and opine on disputed issues with clarity and authority. She continues to work as an independent advisor on live construction projects, ensuring her knowledge remains current and practically grounded.



In 2023, Faye published *Building Women – How everyone in construction can win*, a powerful call for cultural change in the built environment. Drawing on research with over 1,000 participants, the book explores how systemic issues impact both women and men and offers actionable strategies to foster gender equality, allyship, and inclusive workplaces.

Through her technical expertise and advocacy, Faye is helping to shape a more equitable and sustainable construction industry for everyone.



ARU Women in Public Services Research: Power, Purpose and Progress



Dr. Lauren Godier-McBard

Centre for Equity in Uniformed Public Services, ARU

Lauren is an Associate Professor of Women & Equalities and Director of the Centre for Military Women's Research at ARU.

Lauren is a mixed methods researcher with a background in psychology and psychiatric research. Lauren's work focuses on the needs and experiences of women during and after military service, and interpersonal/sexual violence in the military context. Lauren has led and published some of the first research projects focused on the experiences and needs of women in the UK military and veteran community. She has received funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research and the Office for Veterans' Affairs and NHS-England for her research with female veterans and her work has impacted on national policy.



Professor Emma Williams

Director of the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, ARU

Professor Emma Williams joined Anglia Ruskin University in 2024 after her role as Academic Director at the Open University. Her career has taken her through some of the UK's key institutions, including the Metropolitan Police, the Ministry of Justice, and Canterbury Christ Church University. Throughout, she's been a driving force in policing research—especially in how rape cases are investigated and in addressing officer wellbeing. Emma is known not just for her work but for lifting up others, advocating for evidence-based policymaking, and sharing her insights at conferences and webinars across the globe.

Before joining Anglia Ruskin, Emma completed a two-year secondment with the Ministry of Justice. She then took on a senior lecturer post at Canterbury Christ Church University, where she designed and delivered a successful MSc programme tailored for serving police officers. Her journey began as a principal researcher at the Metropolitan Police Service, where she led research into rape and serious sexual offences, public trust in policing, and community engagement. She's always championed the idea that those working on the front lines—practitioners—have invaluable knowledge that deserves a central role in shaping research.

In 2021, while at the Open University's Centre for Policing Research and Learning, Emma led a key strand of research for Operation Soteria—a major Home Office-funded project looking into how rape and serious sexual offences are handled. She and her team placed a strong emphasis on real-world impact, focusing on officer wellbeing and professional development. One of the standout outcomes was the redesign of a specialist training course for officers, developed in collaboration with the College of Policing. Emma's work draws on a rich blend of policing research, justice theory, organizational thinking, criminology, and sociology.



Dr. Melanie Boyce

Director of the Centre for Military Women's Research, ARU

Dr Melanie Boyce, Associate Professor for Gender and Social Justice, began her time at ARU in 2004 as a Research Assistant after completing her MSc in Social Research Methods from London South Bank University. Over the next five years, she worked on several internationally funded research projects focusing on mental health and social inclusion—where her deep curiosity about the inequalities facing marginalised communities first took shape.

Motivated by this growing interest and while working full-time, Melanie embarked on a PhD exploring the role of self-harm peer support groups. This work marked the beginning of her dedication to understanding the intersection between gender and experiential ways of knowing—an approach that has continued to inform her projects since. Following her PhD, she has led research initiatives in areas such as adult self-harm, marginalised groups and communities, and feminist enquiry.

Her academic work brings her into regular contact with people often considered marginalised or vulnerable due to their social or health-related circumstances. These interactions provide “the essential evidence that goes into her research.” Specifically, they offer “the concrete proof that can potentially influence the development of socially just policy and practice.” Her emphasis on experiential ways of knowing—gaining knowledge through direct experience—peer-led initiatives, and the ethics of researching with marginalised communities defines her inclusive, feminist research methodology.

Melanie is now a seasoned qualitative researcher, specialising in feminist forms of inquiry and inclusive methodologies. Alongside her own research, she also supervises doctoral students. She is currently overseeing three PhDs, including Sarah Moore's VC Studentship: ‘An exploration of the mental support needs of women experiencing Hyperemesis Gravidarum in the UK’. She has also recently completed four PhD supervisions, including: Beverley Gilbert (2024): ‘An Examination of peer mentoring, specifically with women who have multiple and complex needs in England’ Fatemeh Azizi (2021): ‘Identifying factors that facilitate or inhibit the integration of female Afghan refugees into British society’. In addition to research and supervision, Melanie teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate Social Work courses at ARU. Her areas of expertise include research methods, peer support, marginalised groups, and trauma-informed care.

She also supervises MA Social Work dissertations and is a regular contributor to ARU's Doctoral Training Programme.

In 2024, Melanie co-authored ‘Come to us in a peaceful way: Improving experiences of Roma families with children's services in England’, a research report with colleagues from ARU and Lancaster University. This multi-method study brought together universities, civil society organisations, practitioners, and legal professionals to address concerns around the overrepresentation and treatment of Roma families in children's services.

The report centred Roma voices throughout the research and identified the challenges Roma families face, including “discrimination, economic hardship and cultural misunderstandings” that shape their interactions with children's services. It also revealed a “deep seated mistrust and fear for authorities” and a lack of cultural competence within services, all of which contribute to the barriers faced. A key recommendation from the report urged Government departments to ensure that ethically sensitive information in administrative data is separated to maintain consistency across all departments.

Melanie's work shows how dedicated, inclusive research can challenge entrenched injustices and inform meaningful policy change. Her determination has “given countless individuals who are isolated a voice,” demonstrating that “change is achieved through Melanie's work”—making the world, for those who need it most, a better and brighter place.



Professor Samantha Lundrigan

Co-Director - Centre for Social Justice, Communities and Participation, ARU

Sam joined ARU in January 2009 from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University. Until 2005, she was at the Institute of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. She is one of a pioneering group of researchers who were instrumental in the establishment of Investigative Psychology as a prominent international research field. In 2017, she was appointed as the first Director of IPPPRI. Under her leadership, PIER has become a leading light in the field of public protection, delivering research of outstanding quality and impact as well as developing strong and productive relationships with a range of global stakeholders across the public sector, government, industry and the third sector.



JO LIVING

ARU Entrepreneur Development, and Founder of Aces High

Helping Teams Raise Their Game – From the Poker Table to the Boardroom Table!

Jo Living, originally from Islington, is a bold innovator whose career spans finance, tech, wellbeing, and education. A graduate of the University of Cambridge, where she studied Land Economy and served as President of the Land Economy Society, Jo has built a reputation for combining strategic vision with entrepreneurial drive. Since joining Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in 2023, she has been leading the creation of a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem, designed to equip the next generation of founders with the tools, mindset, and support needed to thrive.

Before entering higher education, Jo explored the high-pressure world of finance as an investment banker at JP Morgan Chase. This early experience honed her ability to remain calm and strategic in high-stakes situations, skills that continue to shape her leadership style today. She later pivoted to the wellbeing sector, co-founding Life Up Mindfulness, a programme focused on resilience and mental strength, particularly in demanding professional environments.

In 2021, Jo expanded her work into the tech world. She founded FemTech, an accelerator programme specifically designed to support female-led start-ups in an often male-dominated sector. That same year, she co-founded Aura Fertility, a pioneering digital platform that provides much-needed psychological and emotional support to individuals and couples undergoing IVF. Under her leadership, Aura secured £1 million in investment funding, a testament to her ability to transform powerful ideas into scalable and impactful ventures.

“
Winning in male-dominated environments - from the poker table to the boardroom table!”

In 2021, Jo expanded her work into the tech world. She founded FemTech, an accelerator programme specifically designed to support female-led start-ups in an often male-dominated sector. That same year, she co-founded Aura Fertility, a pioneering digital platform that provides much-needed psychological and emotional support to individuals and couples undergoing IVF. Under her leadership, Aura secured £1 million in investment funding, a testament to her ability to transform powerful ideas into scalable and impactful ventures.

Not one to shy away from unconventional approaches, Jo also developed Aces High, an immersive corporate team-building experience based on poker. The programme harnesses the intensity and strategy of the game to teach vital soft skills like negotiation, risk management, communication, and performance under pressure. In Jo's words, “it creates an artificially stressful environment that mirrors the fight-or-flight response,” allowing participants to practise real-world decision-making in high-stakes settings safely.

At a time when UK industries face what's been described as a looming “skills chasm,” initiatives like Aces High offer practical ways to close the gap. These interactive sessions help teams develop not just vocational expertise, but also the emotional intelligence and strategic thinking needed to navigate uncertainty and complexity in modern workplaces. With options ranging from small team sessions to large tournaments, the programme has gained widespread recognition. It has been featured by the BBC and Virgin, with Richard Branson praising it as “a clever approach” to learning key business skills.

Jo's client portfolio is as diverse as her interests, including organisations such as SuperSeed (a B2B tech investor), Client Earth (an environmental law charity), and Cadence & Partners (a leadership consultancy). This range reflects her belief that soft skills are not industry-specific. They are essential across all sectors, from climate-focused NGOs to tech investors. As Jo often says, quoting Karren Brady, “People do business with people.” In a world increasingly dominated by technology, Jo champions the human element—using innovation not to replace people, but to empower them. Her commitment to lifelong learning and human potential is a consistent thread in her work. She believes that education and growth happen everywhere, not just in lecture halls or meeting rooms, but at the poker table, in start-up accelerators, and through lived experience. Her initiatives reflect a belief that levelling up means more than ticking boxes; it's about equipping individuals with the confidence and clarity to take ownership of their future.

Jo lives in London with her husband, son, a cat, and four stick insects. Whether she's building ventures, mentoring founders, or crafting team-building experiences, she brings energy, curiosity, and a passion for meaningful change to everything she does.

MIND MEETS MARKET

Unlocking Innovation Through Knowledge



Natalie Phillips
Landmark Theatres

Head of Content & Business Development at Landmark Theatres and part of the organisation's senior leadership team, Natalie plays a key role in shaping its direction, leading on marketing, sales, and data insight, while also driving forward new ideas for growth and income.

Natalie's spent over 15 years working across the arts and cultural sector. Before joining Landmark, she was at Arts Council England for five years – two of those as a Senior Relationship Manager – where she worked closely with a range of cultural organisations across the East of England, and led on strategic, place-based development initiatives.

Earlier in her career, she worked with a National Portfolio Organisation in London and also with ATG, one of the UK's major commercial theatre groups. That mix of experience, in both subsidised and commercial settings, gives her a sharp sense of how different models work and how they can complement each other.

Natalie's known for her focus on audience development and for using data in a way that feels human. She's passionate about helping cultural organisations grow – and about making sure they connect meaningfully with the communities they serve. She has been an integral part of making sure the culture, media and art in England are prosperous and thriving.



Camilla Nicholl
Chief Executive,
United Kingdom
Antarctic Heritage
Trust

Camilla Nichol is Chief Executive of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT), a UK-based charity dedicated to preserving six historic sites on the Antarctic Peninsula and the wreck of Shackleton's legendary ship, Endurance. UKAHT's mission is to inspire future generations through the extraordinary stories of human endeavour in Antarctica, encouraging greater responsibility for the continent's future.

Camilla studied Geology at the University of Edinburgh and went on to complete a postgraduate degree in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her career spans over two decades in the museums and heritage sector, having worked across universities, local government, and charitable organisations.

In addition to her role at UKAHT, Camilla serves on several advisory bodies in the heritage and polar sectors. These include the advisory board of the Scott Polar Research Institute, the Heritage Advisory Panel for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, the Antarctic Place-names Committee, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Polar Regions. She is a former Chair of the Cromwell Museum Trust, a past Trustee of the Burton Constable Foundation, an Associate of the Museums Association, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Camilla combines scientific expertise with a deep commitment to storytelling and conservation, playing a key role in connecting the public with Antarctica's unique heritage.



Dr. Shabnam Sadeghi Esfahlani
Associate Professor in Robotics
at Anglia Ruskin University

Dr. Shabnam Sadeghi Esfahlani is an Associate Professor in Robotics at Anglia Ruskin University and a recognised leader in robotics, artificial intelligence, and sustainable technology. Her interdisciplinary research spans mechatronics, autonomous systems, serious games, and digital twins, with a clear focus on developing intelligent solutions to real-world challenges across healthcare, engineering, and the energy sector.

A Chartered Engineer and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Shabnam combines academic excellence with practical impact. She leads the MSc Automation and Robotics programme and serves as Deputy Leader of the BORI research group, where she mentors students and drives forward innovative, cross-disciplinary projects.

Throughout her career, Dr. Esfahlani has secured approximately £800,000 in research funding from prestigious bodies, including Innovate UK, UKRI, and the European Commission. Her portfolio includes projects in AI-powered clinical decision-making, autonomous drone navigation, sustainable systems engineering, and advanced algorithm development.

Renowned for her collaborative approach, she forges strong links across academia, industry, and government to ensure her research translates into tangible societal benefits. Her publications and conference contributions demonstrate a consistent dedication to leveraging engineering and emerging technologies to enhance lives and foster a more sustainable future.

Dr. Esfahlani's work is rooted in a belief that technology should serve humanity. She brings to her role not only technical expertise but also the enduring values of her Iranian heritage, a legacy of innovation, resilience, and a commitment to building a better world through science, education, and shared progress.



Andy Brady
Social Enterprise
Consultant

He has led and initiated projects, courses and modules in charity and social enterprise leadership for over 20 years at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU). He also delved into the literary world, writing several book chapters and academic articles on the subject. Regularly interviewed on television and radio, Andy has no fear of his knowledge being broadcasted to the nation. His publicly accessible articles for The Conversation have seen Andy addressing the issues faced in the third sector.

Equipped with his Masters in Community Enterprise from Judge Business School as a member of Girton College, Andy has placed an emphasis on practical learning programmes for professionals. In 2008, 3rd Sector Futures was set up, which aimed to put a spotlight on all the hard work done by ARU within the third sector. The Cert HE in charity and Social Enterprise Management trained close to 200 third sector leaders from all over the country between 2011 and 2021, this then fed into a degree apprenticeship course for charity professionals. Through his role as lead business coach for the Ariane de Rothschild Fellowship and occasionally carrying out strategy sessions with boards of trustees at the University of Cambridge, Andy has continued his mentoring with the hope that he is preparing the future work force with the necessary skills they will need to flourish in the third sector.

Andy has also worked as a charity co-ordinator, a trustee, a social entrepreneurship & leadership trainer overseas (Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia), an external examiner for two other universities, and as a visiting lecturer with the University of Cambridge.

Beginning his work as a trainer in English as a foreign language in the early 1990's, Andy has learnt how to best put his passion into action – he is now a subject lead for HR and Organisational Behaviour. This integral role was made attainable for Andy through his prior role as specialist in management for social enterprises, charities, and voluntary organisations. In a time with rapidly rising costs, non-profit organisations have an even more pivotal role in bettering lives, something Andy has a clear commitment to.

MIND MEETS MARKET



Professor Sian Moore

Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation, Faculty of Business and Law, Anglia Ruskin University

Professor Sian Moore is an expert in work, employment relations, and labour history, with a particular focus on intersectionality, representation, and organisation at work. She has published extensively on gender, class, and industrial relations, with recent research focusing on the experiences of frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the intersectional dynamics of the 2009–2011 British Airways industrial dispute.

Sian studied History at the University of York before completing her PhD at the University of Essex, where her thesis explored gender and class consciousness in the Bradford Worsteds industry (1780–1845). This early research sparked her enduring interest in labour and women's history, themes that continue to underpin her work.

Before joining Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), Sian held professorial roles at the University of Greenwich, where she served as Director of the Centre for Research on Work and Employment (CREW), and at the University of the West of England, where she was Co-Director of the Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR). She has also held senior research posts at the University of Leeds (CERIC), London Metropolitan University (WLRI), and the Labour Research Department.

Sian began her career in local government and was an active trade unionist with NALGO (now UNISON), grounding her academic work in lived experience. She also contributed to the Leverhulme Trust's Future of Unions Programme at the London School of Economics.

Now as Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation at ARU, Sian leads strategic research initiatives across the Faculty of Business and Law. Her expertise in academic leadership, labour research, and social justice continues to shape policy-relevant scholarship and support the development of future researchers and practitioners in employment relations.

“

There is a need to bring in individuals from different fields to help diversify our industry. We need to bring in academics, to help implement new structures to make our organisation more dynamic

– Natalie Phillips

”



“Connecting Worlds”

Research Without Limits, Impact Without Borders



Professor Laurie Butler
Pro Vice-Chancellor and
Dean of the Faculty of
Science and Engineering



Professor Catherine Lee MBE
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of
the Faculty of Arts, Humanities,
Education and Social Sciences



Dr. Danielle Green
Associate Professor of Ecology



**Professor Shahina
Pardhan OBE**
Professor of Optometry and
Director of the Vision and Eye
Research Institute (VERI)

Professor Laurie Butler is Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), where he provides strategic leadership across ARU's campuses. A Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, he is also a visiting professor at both Tohoku University in Japan and the University of Reading, UK.

Professor Butler joined ARU in 2019 following a distinguished tenure at the University of Reading, where he served as Head of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences for over six years. With a strong academic background in psychology, his research focuses on the intersection between cognitive function and behavioural science. His key areas of interest include nutrition and cognition, ageing, memory, decision-making, and behaviour change. His work contributes to understanding how everyday factors, such as diet and ageing, influence cognitive performance and psychological well-being. Throughout his career, Professor Butler has successfully led major academic teams and developed interdisciplinary research programmes. He remains active in supervising postgraduate research students and is committed to supporting emerging talent in science and engineering. His leadership is instrumental in advancing ARU's research excellence and impact across the UK and internationally.

Professor Catherine Lee MBE is Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University. A leading advocate for inclusion, she has published extensively on LGBTQ+ equality in education, earning national media attention for her research and advocacy.

Catherine's influence extends far beyond academia. She established the UK's first LGBTQ+ leadership programme for teachers and university staff, working in partnership with schools and higher education institutions to foster more inclusive environments. Her drive is deeply personal, having worked as a teacher during the repressive Section 28 era. Catherine's lived experience has fuelled her lifelong commitment to change. That chapter of her life inspired the BAFTA-nominated film *Blue Jean*, based on her story. In 2023, Catherine was awarded an MBE for Services to Equality in Education, a recognition not only of her academic contributions but of the personal courage and authenticity that continue to shape her leadership and impact.

Dr. Danielle Green is an Associate Professor of Ecology at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and Director of ARU's Applied Ecology Research Group. Her work centres on the ecological impacts of human activity, with a particular focus on plastic pollution. Dannielle holds a BSc (Hons) in Marine Science from the University of Sydney and completed her PhD at University College Dublin, followed by a research fellowship at Trinity College Dublin. She joined ARU in 2016 and has since become an internationally recognised expert on plastic pollution, ranked among the top 2% of global researchers in Environment and Ecology by Stanford University-led citation metrics.

Her groundbreaking research on the ecological effects of biodegradable microplastics has informed UK and EU legislation, including bans on microbeads. In 2021, she co-authored the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report *From Pollution to Solution: A Global Assessment of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution*, which raised global awareness of the pervasive contamination of ecosystems by plastics and called for urgent policy responses.

Dannielle's contributions have been instrumental in shaping international policy, supporting the momentum behind the forthcoming Global Plastics Treaty. She is a member of the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty (SCEPT), where she provides scientific guidance to global negotiators. Her work advocates for evidence-based targets, robust monitoring frameworks, and measurable actions to address plastic pollution.

Through her research, policy engagement, and academic leadership, Dr Green continues to bridge science and action, ensuring that environmental decisions are guided by rigorous, applied ecological research. Her career stands as a testament to how focused scientific inquiry can drive meaningful change at both national and international levels.

Professor Shahina Pardhan OBE is the UK's first female Professor of Optometry and Director of the Vision and Eye Research Institute (VERI) at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. A trailblazer in both science and leadership, she has dedicated her career to ensuring that research drives real-world, inclusive impact.

With over 249 peer-reviewed papers and £7.5 million in research funding, Professor Pardhan's work addresses significant global challenges, ranging from diabetic retinopathy and dual sensory loss to health inequalities. Her research doesn't sit in journals; it translates into culturally sensitive, co-created health programmes that have helped reduce preventable blindness across the UK, Africa, and Asia. Under her leadership, VERI was recognised as world-leading in the Research Excellence Framework, and she continues to position the institute at the forefront of vision and eye health innovation.

Professor Pardhan's accolades include the Order of the British Empire (OBE), the Silver (Fincham) Medal, and recognition on the Ophthalmology Powerlist as one of just ten global Champions for Change. In 2025, she was named one of the Top 100 Most Influential People, not only for her scientific achievements but for her deep commitment to equity and representation.

A passionate advocate for gender equality, she leads the Women in Vision UK leadership portfolio, mentoring and championing the next generation of women in science and academia. Whether driving research, shaping global policy, or lifting others along the way, Professor Shahina Pardhan exemplifies purposeful leadership, proving that science is most powerful when it's rooted in equity, collaboration, and the courage to challenge the status quo.



Fiona McGonigle, Founder We Are GLOBAL Women - Debate Chair

Fiona chaired the Equity Exchange Debate Opening with the Debate Motion: "This House Believes That Gender Equity is Everyone's Battle — But We're Fighting on Different Fronts." Then halfway through Fiona flipped the script, inviting our Panelists to speak from the opposite side's perspective. All leading to a very engaging debate discussion from all panelists.



Shelly Coleman Marsh
Co-Founder, KMG

Shelley Coleman-Marsh has known many guises, she is a: business owner, entrepreneur and a gender equality advocate. As the founder of Women in... Series (WINS), Shelley embodies a strong passion for the construction of safe spaces for women, as a means to grow their professional networks and to reach their full potential. WINS has a community focused, bespoke mentoring technology at its fingertips – to help redefine how women support one another across a plethora of sectors. Another venture spearheaded by Shelley is Women in the Built Environment (WITBE), a flagship initiative that champions gender equality in the - male dominated – construction and engineering industries.

Starting out in sales in Johannesburg in the 1990's, Shelley has an adept ability of adaptation, knowing how to reinvent and repackage herself in her professional life. Taking a path that was uncommon for her peers (structural engineering), she has come face to face with the patriarchy on numerous occasions, and fended it off! Smashing barriers, removing obstacles, opening the door, and keeping it open, for other women to embark on the journey of entering the construction sector. She has an insatiable desire to learn and gage how people wish to lead and thrive in their chosen environments. Co-founding Knowledge Mentoring in 2004, she helped to create programs that would revitalise and encourage development in the form of comprehensive and structured mentorship schemes, to transfer knowledge for leadership development, management development

"The Equity Exchange: Unfiltered, Unscripted and Mic-Drops – Flipping the Script." Female panel



Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE - *Global Economic Abuse Expert, All Things Economic Abuse*

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE is a world-leading expert on economic abuse. She conducted the UK's first research into the issue in 2008 and developed the Economic Power & Control Wheel. This groundbreaking tool laid the foundation for national and international understanding of economic abuse.

In 2016, as a Churchill Fellow, Nicola travelled to Australia and the US to explore best-practice responses to economic abuse. This experience inspired her to found Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) in 2017, the UK's only charity dedicated to raising awareness and improving responses to economic abuse. She served as Founding CEO until May 2024, leading the organisation through a period of significant growth and impact.

Her work has earned widespread recognition, including an OBE for services to victims of domestic and economic abuse in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours. In 2022, she authored Understanding and Responding to Economic Abuse, published by Emerald, a vital resource for professionals and policymakers.

Nicola is an Emeritus Research Fellow at the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan University. She serves as an Expert Advisor to the International Finance Corporation. She is the Global Learning Facilitator for the International Coalition Against Economic Abuse, helping to shape international policy and practice.

Now working independently, Nicola offers consultancy services focused on enhancing women's economic safety. Her current work involves building global partnerships and sharing expertise to improve systems and support for survivors worldwide.

Through her research, leadership, and advocacy, Nicola has helped put economic abuse firmly on the public agenda, creating lasting change in both policy and practice across sectors and borders.



Olu Orugboh - *Co-Founder & CEO, Black Talent & Leadership in STEM & Chair of CW*

Olu Orugboh is a Digital Transformation and DEI Specialist. She helps leaders grow sustainably while remaining resilient, inclusive, and keeping the customer at the forefront of everything they do. With two decades of experience in founder and senior leadership roles, Olu has made a career out of driving businesses through wchange - supporting organisations as they transition into digital environments without losing sight of people, purpose or performance. Olu is currently Chair of the Board at Cambridge Wireless (CW), the UK's leading international community for companies working across wireless, mobile, internet, semiconductor and software technologies. She has been a Board Member at CW since 2019 and stepped into the Chair role in 2024. She is the Co-Founder and CEO of Black Talent & Leadership in STEM—a platform that exists to unlock potential and grow visibility and access for Black professionals across the UK's STEM sectors.

In 2005, Olu founded Synergy Organisational Solutions, a specialist digital innovation and consultancy practice helping organisations remain competitive in a world where customer expectations and technologies are constantly evolving. The company's vision is simple yet powerful: help customer experience leaders raise the bar by embedding the digital technologies today's customers demand and expect. Alongside this, Olu has held the role of Non-Executive Director at Seriously Helpful Online Marketing since 2014, and in 2023, she took on the position of Chief Operating Officer at Age Care Technologies—a role she will hold through to early 2025. Her remit here has focused on the operationalisation of digital tools that improve the quality of care and life for ageing populations.

Olu is an alumni of Henley Business School. With her stakeholder management being coined as second to none by colleagues, Olu is a force to be reckoned with! She knows how to liase and spark up inspiration in her peers, whilst also being able to acknowledge and consider the nuances of culture and learning development and any potential overlaps in her business practices. Whether she's supporting inclusion in STEM or advising on customer-centric digital change, Olu's work sits at the intersection of technology, people, and purpose - exactly where she's always thrived.



Nicola Grant - *SHe2 Leadership*

Nicola Grant is the Founder and CEO of SHe2, Leadership Limited and the visionary behind the SHe2 Leadership Network and Wonder Women book series—initiatives grounded in the belief that equity, storytelling, and community are powerful catalysts for change.

With a career spanning over two decades, Nicola brings deep expertise across executive search, entrepreneurship, leadership development, consultancy, and community building. She has worked across sectors including financial services, property, hospitality, and food innovation, and has successfully launched and led multiple ventures, among them an award-winning patisserie and a residential property development firm.

Her strategic and operational acumen is evident in her work with high-profile clients, such as Soho House & Co. and The Roof Gardens in Kensington, where she has led inclusive leadership initiatives, internal communications strategies, and impactful events. Nicola is also the published curator of the Wonder Women book series, a Fellow of the RSA, and an Activator with SheEO. Through these platforms, she consistently champions systemic change by amplifying the voices of underrepresented individuals and creating spaces for authentic leadership.

At SHe2, Nicola focuses on removing barriers so all women can thrive professionally, personally, and holistically. Her programmes centre on emotional intelligence, financial resilience, and network-building that genuinely uplifts. She's particularly passionate about supporting women through periods of transition, such as relationship breakdowns, by equipping them with the tools and confidence to rebuild and lead.

A self-declared eternal optimist and proud mother of five daughters, Nicola is driven by one guiding belief: it's never too late to find your passion and flourish. Her work is rooted in radical generosity, human connection, and a deep commitment to creating inclusive environments where women are empowered to lead with purpose and lasting impact.

The Equity Exchange

Unfiltered, Unscripted & Mic-Drops - Flipping the Script

Male Panel



Lee Chambers - CEO, Male Allies UK

Is the Founder and CEO of Male Allies UK. After a varied career ranging from corporate finance to building and exiting his own tech company, he now works closely with organisations to engage men in inclusion and foster meaningful allyship.

A graduate of Manchester Metropolitan University, Lee has gone on to become a recognised voice for gender equality, with features in publications such as Vogue, The Times, and The Guardian. His work has been celebrated through a number of awards and roles: he's appeared on the Startups 100 Index, received a Great British Entrepreneur Award, and sits on the board of CMI Women, Regenerage UK, and the Business School at his alma mater. In 2024, he was awarded the Freedom of the City of London for his contribution to equality in business.

Lee often shares his personal journey into allyship, from the period where he lost the ability to walk and was forced to re-evaluate his view of masculinity, to becoming a stay-at-home dad, and later, working within industries where gender imbalance is still all too common.

Over the years, he's become a powerful voice for change, helping to open up conversations around gender inequality in ways that feel accessible and necessary.

He's also the first Black British scientist to be named a Kavli Fellow by the National Academy of Sciences in the US, honoured for his work on health inequalities. In 2023, he was named UN Women Changemaker of the Year and now serves as an ambassador for the UK Government's Lilac Review for Disabled Entrepreneurship.

Lee regularly speaks on global stages—like One Young World, ChangeNOW and the Bloomberg Global Equality Summit.



Lord Wesley Pestano - President, London Diplomatic Association (LDA)

Lord Wesley Pestano was born in Guyana and moved to England as a baby with his mother, who migrated to train as a nurse. Raised in Hammersmith, he discovered a love for performance early on, perfecting his comedy and dance skills in pubs and working men's clubs throughout the UK.

Inspired by legends like Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire, Wesley began tap dancing lessons and eventually left his legal studies to pursue a career in showbusiness. He went on to perform in many of London's top West End theatres and became a resident dancer on Top of the Pops during the 1980s, sharing the stage with iconic artists of the time. He even appeared in the James Bond film Octopussy (1983), acting in a high-octane scene alongside Roger Moore.

Beyond entertainment, Wesley's entrepreneurial spirit has led him to remarkable success in international business. For over 30 years, he has served as President of the London Diplomatic Association (LDA), a prestigious members' club connecting the global diplomatic community with UK-based and international businesses. Under his leadership, the LDA gained global prominence, with nearly all accredited diplomats in London becoming members.

Wesley also spearheaded the LDA's expansion into two major subsidiaries: The East England Business Partnership (EEBP) and Wanderlux, which includes the award-winning Wanderlux Club Elite, a luxury travel service offering bespoke corporate and private experiences. These ventures are complemented by two elite networks: the International EA and PA Club Elite and the Global Ambassadors and High Commissioners Club, with offices in Monaco, Florida, and Scotland.

Wesley Pestano's career reflects bold reinvention, versatility, and an unwavering commitment to connecting people across sectors, industries, and cultures, with humour, humanity, and vision at the heart of it all.



Philip Marsh - Founder & CEO, KM Group

With over 40 years of experience under his belt as visionary and civil engineer, has worked on large scale design and construction projects. As part of his career, he has helped develop a structural engineering software as well as being an intricate part of accelerating career progression in both the African and UK spheres. The creator of multi award winning development mentoring methodology, 'Knowledge Mentoring', he has helped provide a unique software with a service solution that helps steer graduates and apprenticeships towards professional registration or chartered status. The venture features an app, to help connect the software and it's partners, who are from both Africa and the UK, to help reach their target audience.

A highly desired keynote speaker across five continents, the insights that Philip brings in regards to collaborative mentoring and context rich knowledge sharing, are invaluable to the recipients. The 'Knowledge Swarms and Experiential Hives' model that Philip uses has been indispensable on the journey towards best practice sustainability and the reduction of costs that accumulate as the result of human errors. His initiatives such as Women in the Built Environment (WITBE), Women in Water and Sanitation (WIWAS) and the Maselulekane Candidacy Mentoring Programme have addressed important issues of underrepresented and under served women in Sub Saharan Africa. No individual should be denied the opportunities that others might have easy access to, Philip's careful analysis of the climate to ascertain areas that need development has been key in driving success, giving these women a chance to reach their full potential.

Philip self-published his book Knowledge Mentoring™ – A Framework to Bridge the Global Scarce & Critical Skills Crisis, also writing two internationally published book chapters and authoring a multitude of industry articles. Well established in his role as mentor, Philip has a catalogue of knowledge at his fingertips – such as his 'Knowledge Swarms and Experimental Hives' mode – which he implements with the intention of bolstering sustainability in the engineering and construction sectors. Holding multiple position on professional and chartered registrations, Philip is at the centre of the conversation and the forefront of the push to make technology enabled knowledge help build resilient new innovators to act as the engineering leaders of tomorrow.



Jeremy Stockdale - CEO YLead / Smash The Patriarchy

Jeremy Stockdale is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ylead, a leadership consultancy he launched in 2020 with a clear belief: great leadership should be both data-led and deeply human.

With over 20 years of experience in banking, Jeremy has led large, diverse teams across the UK and Africa in strategic, operational, and frontline roles. He began his career on the ground at Barclays, working his way up while earning his MBA with Distinction. Over the next 15 years, he held senior roles across Retail, Business, and Premier Banking, including a three-year stint in Mauritius, where he helped transform Barclays (now Absa) Retail. His later roles included Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Global Head of Servicing & Support.

In 2020, Jeremy pivoted into consultancy, not to step back from leadership, but to help others step into it. Through Ylead, he partners with senior teams across sectors, blending insight and empathy to build cultures of inclusive, effective leadership. His work often centres on topics close to his heart: inclusive leadership, gender equity, and advocacy.

Jeremy has delivered leadership programmes for clients including Aspen Group, Barclays plc, Bedfordshire Police, Bureau Veritas, CIEL Group, Eclasia Group, ENL, Farrer & Co, HSBC, International General Insurance, International Underwriting Association, Mauritius Commercial Bank, Northumbria Police, S&P Global, Travelers UK, UK Policing, Uniserve Group, and Yorkshire Building Society.

Known for his honest, grounded style, Jeremy brings clarity and care to the boardroom. He's regularly invited to speak and advise on leadership, inclusion, and culture.

Outside of work, he's a loyal Chelsea fan, a confessed armchair sportsman, a slow but committed runner and, most proudly, dad to Phoebe and Toby.



Dr Magdalena Zawisza

Associate Professor in Consumer & Gender Psychology (FSE) ARU

Dr Magdalena Zawisza is currently an Associate Professor in Consumer and Gender Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University — a role that crowns years of research, resilience, and real-world impact. Her work was key in changing UK advertising policy to promote gender equality. But her story begins in Poland, where her path took many unexpected turns before leading to policy reform and academic recognition.

After completing the Polish equivalent of A-levels, Magdalena faced tough entrance exams and was accepted into the Master of Psychology program at the University of Gdansk. Initially, she thought she might become a therapist until a visit changed her mind. “I had seen the psychiatric ward,” she explains, and the experience didn’t align with her desire to impact the world at the expense of her mental health, especially as statistically many psychologists didn’t enjoy their work. From that moment, she knew therapy wasn’t for her, so she decided to focus on a different area of psychology where she could apply her expertise. Instead, her academic path took a sharp turn thanks to a moment many of us can relate to: frustration at a TV advert. “I was just scratching my head one day sitting in front of a telly and effectively, you know, getting frustrated that the Ends advertisement was showing a blonde woman who was surprised that washing up liquid actually washed anything,” she recalls. “And I was asking myself a question, how is it even possible that this is effective from an advertising point of view?” And with that, her battle against gender stereotyping in advertising began.

Wanting to take her research further, Magdalena looked beyond Poland. She dreamed of studying at Oxford and set herself the enormous task of learning English at the age of 21. “This particular task was difficult as it was so late in life,” she admits, but she still managed to earn the highest-level English certificate.

Magdalena also longed for something she couldn’t find in her home country at the time: diversity. “I craved diversity,” she says. “I came from a society which was very uniform at the time. Everyone spoke Polish around me. Everyone was the same colour. Everyone was Catholic. Everyone even spoke the same accent.” England, with its diverse mix of cultures and experiences, was the challenge and change she was seeking.

She was accepted to Royal Holloway, University of London, where she completed her PhD under Dr Marco Cinnirella, focusing on consumer, gender, and social psychology. Despite the challenges, she chose to stay in the UK. “Most science was written in English,” she says, and she found the UK more supportive of young researchers.

Teaching had always been second nature to Magdalena — even back when she was helping classmates pass their exams. She went on to teach at the University of Winchester, a role she describes as a significant shift from her previous experience. “It was a tough environment because it was a teaching-focused environment, and I came from an institution which was very research-focused. So, it was a big shock to the system.”

Although her research time was pushed into evenings and weekends, she sees the time at Winchester as essential to her development. “I learned a lot there. I learned a lot more than a lot of my peers who were going straight into the research kind of positions,” she reflects. “I learned a lot in teaching and educational pedagogy.” But it wasn’t without frustration. While others published under established names and networks, Magdalena often worked alone. “I felt frustrated that my research was not being published at the speed I wished and that my work was not being as recognised as my colleagues,” she says. She learned, the hard way, how essential networking was in research.

Despite this, she made a lasting impact at Winchester, co-supervising PhD and MSc theses, contributing to course design, and leading key modules such as Advances and Debates in Social Psychology, Applied Social Psychology, and Topics in Consumer Psychology.

Alongside her teaching, Magdalena has secured prestigious grants and established her own research consultancy, focusing on socially responsible advertising. She now leads the Applied Social Change Research Hub and the Societies and Groups Research Centre. Her written works include the book “Advertising, Gender, and Society – Psychological Perspective” (2019), co-editing “The Psychological Process of Stereotyping” (2023), and contributing to “The Routledge International Handbook of Consumer Psychology” (2016). She serves on the editorial board for Sex Roles, is a Review Editor for Frontiers in Gender, Sex, and Sexuality Studies, and reviews grant applications for major bodies, including the British Academy and the ESRC.

“That kind of zero-sum thinking is detrimental and harmful to both men and women, and that needs to be changed. And, in fact, gender equality is beneficial not only to women but also to men and society.”

When asked how it felt to know her research had contributed to real, national policy change, Magdalena is reflective. “It felt amazing. I worked for years for that kind of recognition, and not many researchers can claim that their research contributed to policy change. I saw the practical implications of my research contributing to the Advertising Standards Authority to shape lives in a very tangible manner by changing the policy.”

Her work has also inspired others. One of her former students, Dr Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka, is now leading the division of gender and cross-cultural psychology at the University of Gdansk. Together, they helped develop the Gender Harmony project — a global consortium spanning 62 countries, over 100 data collection sites, and 226 researchers. Their mission? To explore how gender stereotypes, especially those around masculinity, are shaped across cultures. Their findings reveal that in many parts of the world, “men must conform to norms such as agency, dominance, pursue high social status, and avoid femininity.”

Since 2013, Magdalena has been at Anglia Ruskin University, where she continues to research gender stereotyping, sexism, and advertising. She co-chairs ARU’s Athena Swan Committee, dedicated to improving the careers of women in academia, and has worked with organisations including Unilever, Mind, and Essex Police.

Looking to the future, her next fight is in the digital space. “I gave a talk about it last year at the Cambridge Festival of Science,” she says. “I know that algorithms are shaping what we see, and they reinforce gender bias. We know that new developments, such as ChatGPT, spit out gender stereotypes at us as well.” She’s currently planning a September conference titled The Social Security of Gender Equality in the Digital Space, which will unite social psychologists and interdisciplinary researchers. “The aim here is to bring together... academics who are interested in that digital space of gender equality and start developing research and methodologies that could harvest that area.”

So, what does society need to change when talking about gender equality? Magdalena is firm: “That kind of 0-sum thinking is detrimental and harmful to both men and women, and that needs to be changed. And, in fact, gender equality is beneficial not only to women but also to men and society.”

Through years of persistence, groundbreaking research, and a push for a fairer future, Dr Magdalena Zawisza has demonstrated that change is not only possible; it’s already happening.



“WE ARE”

EMPOWERING FUTURES

Education, Skills, and the Path to Gender Equity



Fiona McGonigle - Chair
Founder, We Are GLOBAL Women



Professor Marie-Pierre Moreau
Professor of Education, (AHES) ARU



Anne Bailey,
Co-Founder Form the Future



Melissa Lee
Founder & Executive Director,
UK Education Garden



Dr. Magdalena Zawisza
Associate Professor in
Consumer & Gender
Psychology (FSE) ARU

Professor Marie-Pierre Moreau is an Associate Professor of Applied Teaching and Learning and Deputy Dean for Education in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University. She has taught across a variety of age groups, from primary school age to the turbulent GCSE years that our fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds go through at the end of their schooling lives. At her core, Jo has a deep passion for social justice in education and the lifelong learning process that is life. It is from her breadth of knowledge of teaching different age groups in the classroom that has given Jo an excellent and in depth understanding of the educational journey that is embarked upon by our children. Currently, Jo is researching the effects of GCSE educational policy on teaching and learning in the FE sector and exploring student and teacher, engagement, and motivation.

She found an interest in this topic when she was working with students who were resitting their maths GCSE, realising she had an interest in ascertaining the most effective ways to motivate and engage students in a subject that may have not previously excelled in. It culminated in Jo making an analysis of the learning process; the role educators have in instilling students who haven't succeeded with resilience so they can then go on to attain. Through a comprehensive and thorough education, Jo believes that the student's academic success can be more easily obtained.

“

It's so important that we foster inclusive learning environments. We teach to the edges, not just the middle.

”

Anne Bailey is the CEO and Co-founder of Form the Future, which has a core aim of transforming the way in which young people prepare and learn about potential career paths. The seed for the idea that eventually became Form the Future was planted from Anne's unsureness of what to avenue to go down in her own career – when she was decided, she knew that she wanted to help make the working process easier for others.

Through her career, Anne has found it to be a great privilege to grow their non-profit to the standing it has today, an award winning, highly valued partner schools, businesses, and local government. Anne has acknowledged her own learning curve through the construction of the organisation; finds it incredibly stimulating to be working alongside like-minded people who have a strong commitment to their communities.

With a particular interest in linking the corporate contingent of our population with the wider community, Anne acts as conduit between the two to make a lasting and positive social impact. Previously leading an award-winning programme for BT, working with a leading consortium of charities to deliver a government funded national programme as well as also helping launch a social enterprise to create connectivity between schools and businesses, Anne's desire to better others has no bounds. Clarity is key for young people when making decisions about their future, that's why Anne has facilitated the implementation of professional training and executive coaching that addresses the human factors that aid in organisational effectiveness.

'Whether you're a man or a woman, believe that you can do it. Feel fear – but do it anyway!'

Anne Bailey

Melissa Lee is the founder and director of UK Education Garden, established in Cambridge in 2017. She launched the organisation with not only a wealth of experience but also a deep-rooted passion for connecting students with meaningful opportunities and the network to make those opportunities a reality.

Originally from Hong Kong, Melissa earned her Bachelor's degree in Education from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, before moving to the UK to pursue a Master's in Education at the University of Cambridge. She later enhanced her strategic leadership expertise through Executive Education at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford.

Melissa's work has always had a global perspective. From 2015 to 2018, she served as an Advisory Mentor for the Queen's Young Leaders Programme, supporting exceptional young leaders from 53 Commonwealth countries in education, leadership, and personal growth. Since 2019, she has also served as a Public Governor at Cambridge University Hospitals, where she helps strengthen the link between healthcare and education while shaping public sector strategies.

Under Melissa's leadership, UK Education Garden has expanded internationally. In 2019, she co-founded a Hong Kong office with Dr. Liu Min-yee, a veteran educator at the University of Hong Kong and fellow Cambridge alumna. Together, they have guided hundreds of high-achieving students through the UK education system, from competitive university admissions to broader academic pathways.

Melissa is recognised for her cross-cultural insight, strategic mindset, and hands-on approach. She provides families and students with clear, thoughtful guidance and is committed to fostering long-lasting, transformative connections.



Dr Jo Bowse-Angermann - Associate Professor
of Applied Teaching and Learning
Interim Deputy Dean Education (AHES) ARU

Dr Jo Bowse-Angermann is an Associate Professor of Applied Teaching and Learning and Deputy Dean for Education in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University. She has taught across a variety of age groups, from primary school age to the turbulent GCSE years that our fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds experience at the end of their schooling.

At her core, Jo has a deep passion for social justice in education and the lifelong learning process that is life. It is from her breadth of knowledge of teaching different age groups in the classroom that Jo has an excellent and in-depth understanding of the educational journey that is embarked upon by our children. Currently, Jo is researching the effects of GCSE educational policy on teaching and learning in the FE sector and exploring student and teacher engagement and motivation. She developed an interest in this topic while working with students who were retaking their maths GCSE, realising she had a passion for determining the most effective ways to motivate and engage students in a subject where they may not have previously excelled. It culminated in Jo analysing the learning process, the role educators play in instilling resilience in students who haven't succeeded, so they can then go on to attain it.

Through a comprehensive and thorough education, Jo believes that the students' academic success can be more easily obtained.



Rae Snape - Headteacher and Author,
Milton Road Primary School

Rae Snape is an experienced primary Head teacher for over 18 years, NPQEL (National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership), author of *The Headteacher's Handbook – the Essential Guide to Leading a Primary School*, and editor of *The Curriculum Compendium*. Rae believes that despite the many challenges of school leadership, for the sake of our children, colleagues and communities, head teachers should be “flamingos of hope and not lemmings of despair!”

Rae started her headship journey in January 2007, formerly at The Spinney Primary School, Cambridge and now at Milton Road Primary School, Cambridge since January 2020, Rae describes being a head teacher as “the best job in the world!”

Interested in policy and passionate (some might say obsessed) with education, Rae was a member of the Primary Head teachers' Reference Group at the Department of Education for nine years. Rae is a founding member of the sponsoring committee of the Cambridge Chapter of Citizens UK, she is a Founding Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching (FFCT), and in October 2021 was thrilled to receive an Honorary Fellowship from The University of Suffolk for her work in education. In 2004 Rae was delighted to receive the inaugural Cambridge Arts Network Award for “Outstanding Commitment to the Arts”.

Rae has contributed to several books on education and her top-selling first book “*The Headteacher's Handbook*” was published by Bloomsbury in August 2021. Keen to support, coach, and inspire new and aspiring Head teachers in the profession, Rae enjoys presenting at conferences as well as delivering training for local authorities and national teaching school hubs.

You can connect with Rae on LinkedIn or on Blue Sky.



H.E Hon. Sir Don Lahoucine Goghrod - Ambassador/
Diplomat - UN UNSDG Intergovernmental organisation
IGO. Director in charge of International Police

His Excellency, Hon. Sir Don Lahoucine Goghrod, is a highly respected figure in global policing and law enforcement, with distinguished service in the Metropolitan Police Service (Scotland Yard) in London. Over his exemplary career, he has held various roles, including Station Officer and a specialist post within the elite SO15 Counter Terrorism Command, where he built a strong track record in intelligence and national security.

Sir Don's outstanding contributions to public safety have been formally recognised. He received a commendation from the Metropolitan Police as Best Police Staff of the Year and was awarded a Police Medal by the UK Prime Minister. In recognition of his international impact, he was knighted by the Chevaliers des Belges under the patronage of four royal houses—Belgium, Spain, Morocco, and Thailand. Currently, Sir Don serves as an Ambassador and Diplomat with the United Nations' UNSDG Intergovernmental Organisation, where he is the Director of International Police Cooperation. In this role, he leads strategic coordination among global law enforcement agencies, strengthening international policing standards and fostering collaboration. He is an active member of key global policing networks, including the International Police Association (IPA), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and FBI-LEEDA.

His Excellency is committed to advancing justice, promoting international cooperation, and supporting excellence in law enforcement. His leadership exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and global public service.



Jen Richardson - Founder, Project Cambridge

Jen Richardson is the founder of Project Cambridge, launched in Spring 2025 after 13 rewarding years in the recruitment industry.

Born and raised in Cambridge, Jen has built a strong network of local relationships and remains deeply invested in her hometown's growth, striving to make it inclusive, accessible, and driven by kindness.

Project Cambridge was created as a platform to connect people, opportunities, and ideas across the city's dynamic business landscape. Through tailored recruitment services and consultancy, Jen supports both companies and candidates while reinvesting resources into pro bono work that helps individuals facing barriers to employment. Her mission is simple: where business meets kindness, everyone can thrive.

By bridging gaps and promoting sustainable, community-minded growth, Jen is working toward a more connected and compassionate Cambridge.

You're likely to find her at local tech and business events, or hosting insightful conversations on Project Cambridge's video podcast, where she interviews fascinating guests making a difference in the region.



Dr. Helena Kim

With over 35 years of experience in psychology and leadership development, Dr Helena Kim specialises in empowering leaders to master their confidence, leadership presence, and career transitions. Her career transitions. She started as a therapist, where she worked with clients facing dysfunctional relationships, depression, and anxiety. She later transitioned into academia at one of the top universities in the US, where she taught graduate-level courses in Leadership Development, Communication, and Consulting Psychology, topics that became the foundation of her corporate coaching approach.

Twenty years ago, she established her UK-based practice as a Coaching Psychologist. Her client list includes leaders from prominent companies such as Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Fujitsu, the London Stock Exchange, UBS, J.P. Morgan, the NHS, the National Gallery, and the University of Cambridge, among many others. She focuses on decoding and transforming personal power, relational intelligence and professional success.

As a passionate advocate for leadership growth, Helena serves as an external faculty member at the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School, where she leads Action Learning Masterclasses—an innovative group coaching programme for MBA students that focuses on both professional and personal success.

Beyond corporate work, she is committed to giving back, offering pro bono coaching to select charities, teachers, and healthcare workers in Cambridge.

In 2020, she authored the bestselling book "Soft Skills for Hard People," a game-changing toolkit for rational, results-driven leaders who seek to hone their emotional intelligence. Known for her sharp insights and no-nonsense approach, Helena challenges conventional leadership norms, offering bold, actionable tools that resonate with pragmatists, stoics, and forward-thinking professionals alike. The book quickly gained traction, becoming a bestseller in three business and management categories on Amazon.

SOFT SKILLS —for— HARD PEOPLE



A Practical Guide to Emotional Intelligence
for Rational Leaders

HELENA KIM, PHD

CAUGHT

YOUR

ATTENTION?

Meet The Team



Janet, WAGW Event Manager, is the Help to Grow Coordinator within the Faculty of Business and Law at Anglia Ruskin University, playing a key role in supporting the Help to Grow Management Programme. She also co-leads organising industry events, including the “We are GLOBAL Women” conference, and supports the management of ARU’s Help to Grow Alumni Network. Beyond her ARU responsibilities, Janet is a specialist in women’s corrective exercise, focusing on postnatal recovery, core, pelvic floor, and postural issues.

LinkedIn: **Janet Mason**



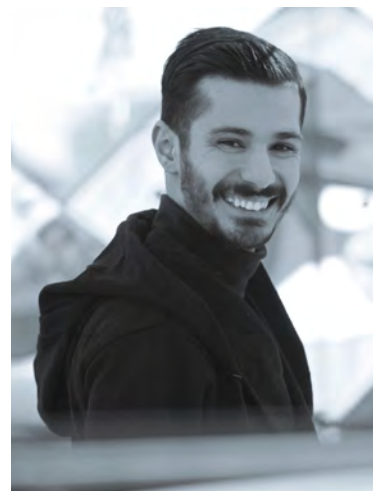
Georgiana Martincu is the founder of Light Bay Studio, a photography brand dedicated to capturing timeless images. With over a decade of experience, she specialised in family portraiture and personal branding photography, creating a unique experience that celebrates her clients’ individuality and milestones. Her mission is to preserve moments and create a legacy through elegant, timeless imagery. Alongside running her own studio, Georgiana is studying for a BA (Hons) in Marketing at ARU Peterborough, combining creativity and strategy to build a business that empowers women to be seen and celebrated.

LinkedIn: **Georgiana Martincu**



Padra Alizadeh is the Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer at Over Border, where he specialises in brand strategy, audience insight, and purpose-led marketing. For the We Are GLOBAL Woman initiative, Padra worked closely with founder Fiona to define the community’s mission, vision, values, and brand identity. This process included multiple strategy sessions and in-depth social listening to authentically reflect the founder’s voice and audience needs. He led the development of the brand’s tone of voice and personality, while also overseeing the strategic direction of social media content. His work ensured consistent, meaningful communication aligned with the brand’s core message and emotional resonance.

LinkedIn: **Padra Alizadeh**



Sam Hosseini is the Co-founder and Chief Design Director at Over Border, where he leads design through a narrative-driven approach that emphasises connection, growth, and transformation. In the We Are GLOBAL Woman project, he developed the core visual identity featuring intertwined hands, flowing lines, and a beating heart, symbols chosen to express unity and ongoing evolution. His work extended beyond a logo to deliver a holistic visual system that shaped a cohesive and emotionally resonant brand experience across all event and community touchpoints. His contribution brought to life a dynamic, inclusive brand that reflects the essence of collective growth and connection.

LinkedIn: **Sam Housseini**



I’m Moses Somolu—a graphic design student based in Cambridge. Originally from Nigeria I’ve always had a love for creative ideas that speak to people. I work across branding, motion graphics, and marketing, using design to tell stories and bring out the heart of a message. Right now, I’m studying at Anglia Ruskin University and developing my skills with real-world projects that mix creativity with purpose.

Instagram: **thatdesigner_oritse**
LinkedIn: **Moses Samolu**



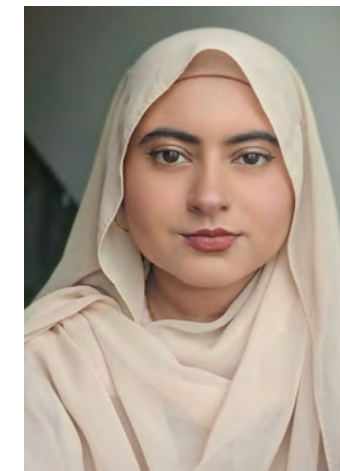
Cody Forster is a student from Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire. He is currently studying Writing and English Literature at Anglia Ruskin University. With a strong passion for words and the importance of language, he aspires to be a broadcast journalist in current affairs. His interests are all things literature, politics and history, which brings additional perspective and depth to his writing. Cody is also a keen swimmer; this helps him to decompress and reapproach his writing work with a positive mindset.

Instagram: **codyfosterr**



I’m Alexandra Nae, a graphic design graduate from ARU living in Cambridge. Designing isn’t just my job, it’s how I share what I feel and see in the world around me. I love making visuals that connect on a real, emotional level, the kind of work that tells a meaningful story and sticks with you long after you’ve seen it.

Instagram: **naae_gd**
LinkedIn: **Alexandra Nae**



Hafsa Zahoor is a Creative Writing student at Anglia Ruskin University with experience in editing, publishing, marketing, and research. Alongside editorial work, she writes for Unifresher and runs NUE WEEKLY, a platform delivering accessible global commentary. Her interests lie in exploring the intersections of creative and academic writing, with a long-term aim to contribute meaningfully to both. She hopes to pursue her education while remaining open to broader writing and communication opportunities.

Instagram: **haffi_zed**



We Are GLOBAL Women Teaser

**"We have heard from the Global Women,
now let's hear from the Global Men"**

**Fiona McGonigle
Founder
We Are GLOBAL Women**

Join us for our next event - Hosted by We Are GLOBAL
Women - *International Men's Day Conference* on **Tuesday
18th November 2025, Anglia Ruskin University.**

