

Speaker and Panellist Profiles

We are delighted to have so many distinguished speakers from a variety of organisations and business sectors. Click on the names below to read more.



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Melanie Dawes CB

Melanie Dawes took up her role as Permanent Secretary for DCLG on 1 March 2015. She continued this role for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government from 8 January 2018. She is also gender champion for the Civil Service and sits on the Civil Service Board and Senior Leadership Committee.

Melanie was Director General of the Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat (EDS) at the Cabinet Office from October 2011, responsible for overseeing the system of Cabinet decision-making. Between 2006 and 2011 she was at HMRC, including as one of the department's Commissioners.

She was Director General for Business Tax from November 2007, which involved responsibility for all the business taxes and duties as well as leadership of the department's relationships with big business. From 2009, she also led the development of HMRC's overall strategy as a department. Before joining HMRC, Melanie spent 15 years at the Treasury, including as Europe Director from 2002 to 2006. She started her career as an economist and has worked on public spending, tax and tax credit policy, macroeconomics, monetary policy and the euro.



Charlotte Keenan

Charlotte joined Goldman Sachs in 2015 as Head of the Office of Corporate Engagement International. She oversees the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme, and the Office of Corporate Engagement which leads the firm's impact investing and philanthropic work. Previously, Charlotte was the Chief Executive of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, a global organization focused on countering extremism. She started her career in investment banking, working firstly with Jefferies & Co in Houston, and then with JP Morgan Cazenove in London.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Programme.





Denise Wilson OBE

Denise is Chief Executive of the Government sponsored Hampton-Alexander Review, formerly the Davies Review for Women on Boards, which leads the national, business-focused task force and voluntary framework for increasing the number of women on FTSE 350 Boards and in leadership positions.

She has recently stepped down from the Board of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group where she served for eight years, chaired the Remuneration Committee and sat on the Audit Committee. She also chaired the Royal Academy of Arts Friends Board for many years and has served on several corporate and charitable boards.

Her executive career began with the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Group, before moving into the energy sector where she held senior roles at British Gas and in successor companies, BG Group and Transco post-demerger. During this time she headed up the Investor Relations and Global Audit functions and at National Grid set up and ran the Shared Services Division, led Commercial, Pricing and Customer Divisions and the Global Transformation program to standardize systems, processes and workplace culture across UK and US operations. She has worked not only in the US but also South America in various energy industry roles.

Denise is also a mentor to business leaders in the corporate and charitable sectors, an influential speaker and advocate for the advancement of diversity in business. She is a graduate in Modern Languages, qualified FCII and speaks fluent Spanish. Denise was awarded an OBE in the 2016 New Year's Honours list for services to women and equality and an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Hull in 2018.



Christine Hodgson

Christine Hodgson FCA is Chairman of Capgemini UK plc. Christine has worked at Capgemini for 20 years in a number of UK and Global roles. Before Capgemini, Christine spent 4 years as Corporate Development Director on the board of Ronson Plc and 8 years at Coopers & Lybrand Corporate Finance. Christine is the Senior Independent Director of Standard Chartered PLC and sits on the board of The Prince of Wales' charity - Business in the Community. In February 2015, Christine was appointed by Government to chair The Careers and Enterprise Company - a new, independent company, the aim of which is to inspire and prepare young people for the world of work.



Anja Skvortsova

Anja has over 13 years' international experience in executive search, and a passion for changing the D&I landscape for business at the highest level.

Anja began her career in a FTSE 250 recruitment company back in 2005 managing the Industry & Commerce finance searches in London. Anja then moved to a Global Industrial Practice for a NASDAQ-listed leadership advisory firm conducting a broad spectrum of executive and Board assignments across the globe.

Prior to joining Audeliss, Anja worked for a boutique search business focusing on Legal and Compliance appointments in the UK and EMEA markets.

With experience of having worked in both global and boutique businesses conducting searches across all functions and geographies enabled her to have a truly broad perspective of client and candidate needs. She believes that quality, honesty and creativity are the key to successful hiring.



Tajinder Banwait

Entrepreneur and beauty industry stalwart, Tajinder Banwait, is the founder and creative force behind Urban Apothecary. As both a fragrance 'nose' and artisan, she brings a perfumer-chemist approach to the unusual pairing of botanicals. Her distinctive aromas, a mixture of memories and moods, are curated into truly original scents for the home.

From humble beginnings at the kitchen table in 2011 the brand has evolved quickly, becoming known and loved. In 2012 the inaugural home collection was showcased in a great British lifestyle store, with fast expansion from 13 to 27 locations. Success continued with London's Top Drawer show awarding the brand 'Best New Product'.

In 2014 alongside 'Start-up 100', 'O2 Smarta' and 'Best New Business' wins, personal recognition is bestowed upon Tajinder with the title 'Mumpreneur of the Year'. Today, there's a candle factory and smart offices in Leicestershire which house the beautifully crafted, award-winning home fragrance and new bath & body products. The range is offered in major retailers and independent stockists across the UK and Internationally via distributors in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, USA, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Hong Kong and China.



Rosie Ginday

Rosie Ginday, Social Entrepreneur, Pastry Chef, Founder and Director of Miss Macaroon. Rosie Ginday is no average baking businesswoman, she founded Miss Macaroon to combine her passion for beautiful hand-crafted food, baking, and her desire to help disadvantaged young adults in her local area, Birmingham. Miss Macaroon is passionate about providing only the very best, hand-crafted, premium macaroons for a sublime moment of indulgence, whether to mark a special occasion such as a wedding or as a gift for others. They also provide macaroons to other businesses and designer brands or via wholesale. At Miss Macaroon indulgence is also a virtue as the social enterprise activities are supported through every macaroon we sell. We provide employment and training programmes aimed at youngsters who may have slipped through the education system, are care leavers or find themselves homeless. This adds an entirely new and unique flavour to our macaroons, and one that can truly be savoured and enjoyed beyond the mere eating of the Miss Macaroon product itself, we're changing the world one macaroon at a time. Rosie is a winner of the Enterprise Catalyst Social Entrepreneur 2015 awards, the Asian Business Young Entrepreneur Midlands Award 2016 and winner of the Ernst and Young Midlands Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year Awards 2016.



Dr Kerry Mashford OBE

A mechanical engineer by background, Kerry is recognised for bringing a 'systems engineering' approach to bear in complex, interdisciplinary fields including city and regional planning; the design and performance of individual buildings; the development of approaches for energy and built environment system design and analysis; and the design of manufacturing systems and equipment.

Kerry was Chief Executive of Milton Keynes based National Energy Foundation for over five years having previously worked across manufacturing, construction, innovation, sustainability and performance in the built environment in academia, public and the private sector. Her activities now

include stimulating innovation, policy and standards through participation in the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund - Transforming Construction Advisory Group, BSI's Retrofit Standards Task Group and The Edge; and working with innovative companies in the built environment and energy sectors.

Kerry is a chartered engineer and Fellow of the Institutions of Mechanical Engineering (IMechE), Civil Engineers (ICE), and Engineering and Technology (IET) and Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA). She is an elected Member of Council of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and a member of the Customer Engagement Group of Cadent Gas. Kerry was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2017. Kerry is a board member at South East Midlands LEP.

Karen Smart

Karen was appointed East Midland's Airport's Managing Director in April 2018. As the region's international gateway the Airport serves just under five million passengers a year; connecting them to over 80 destinations in Europe, and further afield to Florida and Cancun.

As the UK's most important airport for dedicated cargo aircraft, it plays a nationally important role in the UK's ability to trade globally. Prior to joining EMA Karen was Director of Landside Operations at London Stansted Airport, worked for service company Serco and was a Royal Air Force officer.

Karen is board member on 2 LEPs: Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire LEP and Leicester & Leicestershire LEP.



Fern Lulham

Fern was born with a congenital eye condition and is registered blind. After attending mainstream school Fern progressed to the University of Glamorgan and took an exchange programme for one year to Western Carolina University, North Carolina, USA.

She thrived in that environment, becoming the manager of the local radio station, and transferred to WCU, graduating with a BSc in Communication in 2012. For the next six months, she worked at a commercial radio station in Michigan.

On returning to the UK, Fern was exposed to the issues encountered by disabled people in both recruitment and employment, particularly the lack of emotional support for disabled employees, something that she is determined to highlight.

Fern now works as a public speaker and is the President of Toastmasters International Eastbourne Speakers Club. She has spoken at several DWP sponsored Disability Confident events, at the Aniridia Network UK Conference 2018 and talks to a range of audiences about meeting challenges and emotional well-being. She also broadcasts live to AMI Radio, Canada, fortnightly on the Kelly & Co show.

Fern's message is that we should concentrate on our similarities, not our differences.



Christine Gaskell CBE DL

Christine was appointed as the first Chair of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership in March 2011. Christine has spent most of her career in the Motor industry and from 1995 until 2012 she was a Member of the Board at Bentley Motors Limited with responsibility for 4,000 employees worldwide. She was also Chair of the Rolls Royce and Bentley Pension Fund. Under Christine, Bentley invested significantly in improving the skills and capability of its workforce, winning regional and national recognition for its programmes.

Christine has been actively involved in promoting learning and skills and in 2012 she was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to training and apprenticeships. In 2019 she was made a CBE for her services to business and the community, recognising the achievements of the LEP which she leads. She is Vice Chair of NP11 and sat on the LEP Review Committee. She is a member of the Prime Minister's Industrial Strategy Council, an independent body set up to assess the Government's progress on the commitments made in its modern Industrial Strategy. She also sits on the Board of Transport for the North. Amongst her other appointments, Christine holds a number of other non-executive roles and is also Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire.



Sarah Windrum

Sarah is the CEO and co-founder of the Emerald Group. In this role, she works with businesses and organisations wanting to harness technology to achieve their desired goals.

Passionate about potential, Sarah works closely with Warwickshire College and is a governor at Myton School supporting young people to ensure positive outcomes for all. She is also vice-chair of the skills board at Tech UK, the national industry body for the technology sector.

Based in Leamington Spa, Sarah is an active member of the community organising the Camouflage Festival in 2016, working with local charities such as the Warwickshire Bears Wheelchair Basketball Team and British Blind Sport.

Sarah, who has been on the CWLEP board since 2016, is also a member of the Open Spaces Community Group promoting South Leamington. CWLEP recognises the need to represent its SME community appropriately and currently has three SME champions of which Sarah has been identified as an SME Lead.

Sarah is a board member at Coventry & Warwickshire LEP.



Jo Smedley

Jo is Managing Director of Red Herring Games. She has been with the company since its launch in 2007, when she worked solo from the loft of her house. Since those early days, Red Herring Games has grown into an award winning worldwide entity.

She is an export champion for the Department of International Trade, she was a member of BNI for five years, and is also part of the Culture Works artistic network and the Totally Locally group in Grimsby.

Jo is a board member at Humber LEP and the LEP's Small Business Champion.



Ursula Lidbetter MBE

Ursula has chaired the Greater Lincolnshire LEP since it formed in 2010. She is Chief Executive of Lincolnshire Co-op, an independent co-op which is owned by its 280,000 members. The Society's services include food stores, pharmacies, travel agencies and funeral homes. It records sales of over £329m annually and profit of more than £17.5m, which is all reinvested locally, including over £4m to its customer members.

Ursula shares her ideas and energy with other organisations and businesses. She served as chair of the Co-operative Group from 2013-2015, leading it through a period of major reform. She is now a Director of Co-operative Federal Retail and Trading Services. She led the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce for almost 20 years, recently introducing a new structure including a county-wide assembly. She's currently Chair of the Lincoln Business Improvement Group and a member of the University of Hull's Council. Alongside fellow senior industry leaders, Ursula sits on both the government's Retail Sector Council and Food and Drink Sector Council.

In 2012, Ursula was awarded the MBE for services to businesses in Lincolnshire and she is Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Lincolnshire. She has honorary degrees from the University of Hull and Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln.



Dr Ann Limb CBE DL

Ann is the inaugural LEP Ambassador, having served from 2011-2018 as founding Chair of South East Midlands LEP - recently judged exceptional in all areas of performance by government. An experienced business leader and innovative social entrepreneur, Ann is the first woman Chair of The Scouts.

Ann is a widely recognised champion of Milton Keynes and the wider region and is Chair of Destination Milton Keynes – the city's tourism service. Ann is also Chair of the biennial MK International Festival and Chair of the MK Major Events Board, which had overall responsibility for delivery in stadium:mk of the 2015 Rugby World Cup, and in which capacity she currently serves as Chair of Milton Keynes bid to be chosen as European Capital of Culture 2023.



Ann began her career as a teacher and lecturer in 1977 and by 1988 was Principal and Chief Executive of Milton Keynes College. It is a role she held for eight years before becoming Principal and Chief Executive of Cambridge Regional College in 1996. From 2000 to 2005, Ann worked as a senior civil servant in the role of Chief Executive of the University for Industry, now the successfully privatised digital learning organisation learndirect and the digital social enterprise Tinder Foundation. From 2005, as Senior Vice President with the international strategic management consultancy Citizen Service Transformation, Ann advised governments in the UK and overseas on digital innovation. Ann has held an extensive range of public and private sector non-executive directorships, together with many educational, voluntary and community appointments.



Anne-Marie Mountifield

Anne-Marie has been the Chief Executive and Board Director at the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the last 7 years. A member of the Institute of Directors, and the National Maritime UK Council she is also a 'Women in Maritime' ambassador. Before taking up the role as Chief Executive at Solent LEP, Anne-Marie held senior executive leadership posts for more than 20 years in further education, the Civil Service (Department of Business Innovation and Skills) and local government. An inspirational leader, Anne-Marie clearly conveys the vision for the Solent LEP and leads on the development of the strategy for the area and the roll out of the Solent £1bn Capital & Infrastructure programme.



Julie Baker

Julie is Head of Enterprise and Community Finance at NatWest and has a successful career in Business, Corporate and Retail Banking with a track record of building and leading strong and effective award winning teams. Julie was 'Highly Commended' at last year's Women in Finance awards for the program she oversees at NatWest supporting female entrepreneurs. Julie is responsible for leading the ongoing delivery of new and better ways to support enterprise within the UK NatWest SME customer base. Julie is an external influencer and has chaired the BBA Diversity & Inclusion Council and the Access to Finance Group at the APPG for Women in Enterprise. She acts as an Enterprise Ambassador and is an inspirational role model who is passionate about helping others succeed.



Marti Burgess

Marti has over 17 years' experience practising as a corporate solicitor. She is an Associate Director at Gregg Latchams and heads up the Corporate SME team who specialise in share sales, acquisitions and corporate restructures.

Marti is chair of St Pauls Carnival (Bristol) C.I.C. which successfully returned in 2018 after a four year hiatus. Marti and the other board members work throughout the year to put together an infrastructure to support a safe and successful carnival. This iconic event represents the best of Afro-Caribbean culture as well as the diversity, creativity and vibrancy of its home city, Bristol.



She is also trustee of the Black South West Network, a BAME-led organisation that delivers race equality work through undertaking robust, BAME-led research into the social and economic issues that affect BAME communities. Their vision is to create a society in which inequality and discrimination on the basis of racial or ethnic categorisation is wholly and completely absent.

Marti is a trustee of the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership which is a partnership of organisations that aims to build a better Bristol by creating and celebrating arts, culture and heritage. Their programme of commissions, events and festivals ensures that artists, culture and the city itself contribute to the great issues of our time.

Marti is a board member at West of England LEP.

Sara Uzzell

A member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing for 25 years, Sara has spent her career in marketing and business development in the private sector.

For 16 years, Sara led teams in the software and services sector to deliver significant transformation projects for international businesses and public sector organisations.

In 2003, in search of a better work/life balance, Sara moved to Bournemouth where for 14 years she owned and ran two hotels and successfully developed a business offering special interest holidays for groups. Employing a core team of 40, Sara knows first-hand the excitement and achievement of running a small business as well as the challenges and frustrations. Having sold the business in 2018, Sara now works on projects in business development, community and stakeholder engagement.

Sara's collaborative and inclusive influencing style is evident in her board roles for the Business Improvement District, Dorset Tourism and the National Coastal Tourism Academy. As diversity and equality champion for Dorset LEP, Sara has led a campaign to promote the benefits of being a LEP board member. Sara recently chaired the first Dorset LEP Women Leaders event which resulted in record numbers of women applicants and new board appointments.

Sara is Deputy Chair of the Dorset LEP Board. She has been on the board since 2016 and chairs the Growing Places Fund steering group.



Stacey King

Stacey is the Group Regional Director for BT Group and is the face of BT within London and the South East. She has many years' experience in the digital landscape and a passion for skills. Previously she has taken a lead role consulting across a number of the BDUK fibre broadband programmes around the UK and took the lead on the successful Superfast Broadband demand stimulation programme in Surrey. She runs the SE Regional Board alongside the chair, which is a mix of senior managers from within BT, local enterprises and public sector. She is a marketer and has lectured on international marketing for the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Stacey is continuing her interest in education as a serving governor at Trumps Green Infant School.

Stacey is a board member at Enterprise M3 LEP.



Katrina Morris

Katrina works for Disability Rights UK. Her role is The Leadership Academy Executive, leading on a project called The Leadership Academy Programme (LAP).

Katrina has a degree in Law & Business, having started out in a media career, Katrina's professional career has been directed towards creating opportunities for various groups that fit 'The Protected Characteristics' of The Equal Opportunities Act 2010. Katrina brings over 15 years of experience working with age, BAME, young people and disability to her current role.

The Leadership Academy Programme is a career development Programme for people in employment with lived experience of disability or a long-term health condition where employers commit to sending employees from their organisation to attend the Programme. Currently in its fifth year, LAP has grown from strength to strength and focuses on shared good practice and provides a learning platform for disabled employees to see their disability from a positive perspective, consider the skills they already have and learn how these can be transformed into developing their leadership aspirations. Not only has the programme, created opportunities for promotion, there has been considerable success in improved confidence, setting goals and motivation to drive careers forward. Katrina works with existing partner organisations and is seeking new partnerships to develop a community of organisations striving to change perspectives on employment, retention and most importantly the progression of disabled employees.

Katrina also sits as a Trustee for Voyage Youth. VOYAGE is a social justice charity that aims to EMPOWER marginalised black young people and provide them with the self-awareness and motivation to TRANSFORM themselves and their communities. The mission of VOYAGE is to encourage and assist young people to bridge the gap between their schools, communities and criminal justice system, whilst supporting young people to SUSTAIN successful partnerships and meaningful relationships, through various methods, one of which is a Leadership Programme.





Sarah Atkinson

Sarah is Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, Micro Focus and Chair, Diversity & Skills Council, techUK.

A former news journalist and experienced leader, Sarah has spent over 20 years in multinational organizations including Cisco, BEA Systems and BMC Software. Today she is Head of Global Social Responsibility at Micro Focus, the largest technology company in the FTSE 100 and also chairs the Diversity & Skills Council at techUK where she is actively involved in several programs spanning all aspects of inclusion from the classroom to the boardroom, including lifelong learning.



An experienced Non-Executive Director, Sarah is also a trustee at Berkshire Youth, supporting, empowering and inspiring vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. She is also a founding supporter of the WISE Campaign's People Like Me Digital which aims to influence 200,000 11-15-year-old girls in the UK to consider a career in STEM.

Before joining Micro Focus in May 2019, she spent ten years as Vice President, Communications & Social Responsibility, EMEA at CA Technologies. A member of the company's leadership team, she also led an award winning social responsibility program called Create Tomorrow which helped introduce STEM careers to over 30,000 young people and was responsible for the company's Diversity & Inclusion strategy in EMEA. From 2015 to 2018, she served on the main board of techUK.

She was listed in Cranfield University's School of Management 100 Women to Watch report - a supplement to the Female FTSE Board Report 2018 and in the Computer Weekly 100 Most Influential Women in Technology in 2017 & 2018. Most recently she was nominated as a Champion in the WeAreTheCity's Rising Star Awards, supported by the Sunday Times.

A regular commentator on STEM, equality and inclusion topics, she has appeared on BBC News, BBC World and in various publications.