

## Speaker Bios

### Yvette Shapiro - Compere & Panel Chair

Yvette is a journalist, presenter and producer with more than 30 years of experience. She worked as a presenter and journalist for BBC TV, BBC Radio Ulster, UTV and the Belfast Telegraph, as well as producing numerous programmes, including The Stephen Nolan Show. In recent years she worked as a freelance editor, consultant and contributor to programmes and publications across NI, the UK and Ireland.



### Joanne Jennings - Head of Programmes, Politics Plus

Joanne is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and a past member of the Board of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. She has extensive experience in public/private sector partnerships, having previously led a £1 billion regeneration scheme to revitalise Liverpool city centre, which was launched during European Capital of Culture Year and which was a strategic partnership between Liverpool City Council and Grosvenor Estates. She was also previously Belfast City Centre Manager, delivering a partnership between Belfast City Council and the Department for Communities. As Head of Programmes at Politics Plus, lead partner for The Next Chapter Programme, Joanne believes the future success of politics and peace-building here in Northern Ireland and across the island of Ireland relies on increasing the number of women involved in community, public and political life. Her ultimate aim is to give women of all ages and backgrounds the confidence to enter public and political life and build a society where peace and reconciliation is strengthened and where positive social change is delivered.



### Dr Evelyn Collins CBE - Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Dr Evelyn Collins CBE has been Chief Executive of the ECNI since March 2000. Evelyn is a law graduate of Sheffield University, who has Masters' degrees from University of Toronto (Criminology) and Queen's University Belfast (Human Rights and Discrimination Law). In July 2014, the University of Ulster awarded Evelyn the honorary degree of Doctor of Law (LLD) for her contribution to the promotion of equality and good relations. Evelyn is a member of the Equal Rights Trust and was the previous Chair of the Board of Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies and a member of the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men.



### Gina McIntyre - Chief Executive Officer, Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Gina is the Chief Executive Officer of the SEUPB, a cross-border body established under the Good Friday Agreement and working to the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Assembly. She is currently responsible for the European Union's PEACE IV and INTERREG VA funding programmes, totaling in excess of €0.5 billion. The PEACE Programme represents a unique investment by the European Union in support of the peace process, and both Programmes support the development of a more sustainable and prosperous cross-border region, across Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland (INTERREG only). Having spent most of her career involved with EU support programmes Gina has gained extensive knowledge of the complex cross-border development needs of the region and the appropriate European funding instruments available to meet them. Gina is a qualified chartered accountant who trained and qualified with Coopers & Lybrand (now PWC). Before joining the SEUPB as the Director of Corporate Services in 2003, she gained extensive practical knowledge of managing the distribution of cross-border PEACE funding during her work for Co-operation Ireland. Gina is a member of the Lexxion Editorial Board for the European Structural and Investment Funds Journal (EstIF) and regularly speaks at major conferences and exhibitions across Europe.



## Community Panel - 10.30-11.30am

### **Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu - Lawyer, Founder of Women in Leadership publication, Political & Women's Rights Activist**

Dr Shola is a New York Attorney and Solicitor of England & Wales with broad expertise in the financial services industry, an author, public speaker and political commentator. As a political & women's rights activist, she also teaches intersectional feminism to female refugees and asylum seekers; scrutinises government policies from a gender and diversity inclusion perspective; and co-organises women's marches and social campaigns. She founded the Women in Leadership publication as a platform to drive positive change on topical issues that impact women globally through inspiring personal leadership journeys; and established She@LawTalks to promote Women & BAME leadership in the legal profession through universities and secondary schools.



### **Eileen Weir - Shankill Women's Centre**

As a young woman who quit the UDA in her teens, Eileen quickly realised her potential as a future peace-builder. Over a decade later she has been honoured with the 2018 Community Relations Council Exceptional Achievement Award. Earlier this year Eileen was awarded the McCluskey Civil Rights' Memorial Award. It was in the late 1990s Eileen first got involved with Shankill Women's Centre. Eileen also worked with prisoners released early under the Agreement, many of whom had been incarcerated for more than a decade, helping them to integrate back into society, secure employment and adapt to family life.



### **Jacqueline Irwin - Chief Executive, Community Relations Council**

Jacqueline has worked in the fields of criminal justice, social welfare, law and voluntary and community development. Jacqueline is a previous Chair of NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the umbrella body for the voluntary sector). From 2000-2003 Jacqueline was seconded to the UK Civil Service where she worked on the development of services for those seeking asylum including the management of a project to establish operations across 11 locations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in collaboration with Government Departments, Local Authorities and voluntary groups.



### **Ursula McKenna – National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks/Dochas for women**

Ursula has been involved in the community sector in a voluntary and professional capacity for more than 35 years, including childcare initiatives and local rural development programmes. For 21 years she has been the co-ordinator for the Dochas for Women project, working with local women and women's groups, with a particular focus on those who may be isolated. Ursula prides herself in voicing the concerns and issues affecting all women and the barriers that prevent their full participation in local opportunities and initiatives in their local Community. Ursula is mother to four girls and has 5 grandchildren.

## Business & Innovation Panel 12.00-1.00pm

### **Alison Cowzer - Co-founder of East Coast Bakehouse**

Alison is the co-founder of East Coast Bakehouse - a new large scale food manufacturing business based in Drogheda, Co Louth. They produce a range of cookies and biscuits for the Irish, UK and European markets. Alison is passionate about increasing the number of women in politics in Ireland, and is a board member of Women for Election, a non-partisan organisation that provides training, mentoring and support to women interested in getting involved in political life. Alison is also a member of the Advisory Board of GOAL, an international humanitarian organisation working to improve the lives of beneficiaries around the world.



### **Judith Gillespie CBE - Former Deputy Chief Constable, PSNI**

Judith Gillespie retired as Deputy Chief Constable of the Police Service for Northern Ireland in 2014. She had served as Deputy Chief Constable from 2009-2014, and, prior to her retirement, had been a serving Police Officer since 1982. In addition to her role as a Visiting Professor at University of Ulster, she is a member of the Probation Board and was recently appointed to the newly constituted Garda Policing Authority. She also works as an Independent Policing and Leadership Adviser, both locally and internationally.



### **Angela McGowan - NI Director, CBI**

Angela joined the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in 2016 from Danske Bank, where she had worked as Chief Economist for eight years. Angela has enjoyed a varied career in both the public and the private sector and comes with both business insight and significant experience in local economic policy. Angela is involved in the development of a wide range of policy work with particular interests in economic development, education, energy, planning, transport issues and public sector reform. She aims to continue leading and developing CBI Northern Ireland into an effective, and respected, business representation organisation providing influence on key public policy matters.



## Keynote Interview - 1.50-2.20pm

### **Gina Miller - Businesswoman & Transparency Campaigner**

Gina initiated and won in the Supreme Court, the 2016 R (Miller and Dos Santos) v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union court case against the British government over its authority to implement Brexit without approval from Parliament. Gina also co-founded the disruptive modern wealth manager SCM Direct in 2009, and founded the True and Fair Campaign in 2012 calling for an end to financial misconduct in the investment and pension industries. This campaign resulted in text in 3 EU Directives – MiFID II, PRIPS and The Shareholder Directive. In September 2018, Gina launched her newest campaign – [Endthechaos.co.uk](http://Endthechaos.co.uk) aimed at providing unvarnished facts to avoid a chaotic Brexit, and push for the people of the UK to have the right to make an informed decision on the future of Brexit, and the sort of country they wish to live in.



Interviewed by:

### **Declan Lawn - Journalist**

Declan Lawn is an award-winning broadcaster who has worked on a number of television shows including BBC Spotlight and BBC Panorama. Declan presented the Panorama which highlighted the growth of cyber bullying. This included interviews with singer Cher Lloyd and the tracking down of a known cyber bully in England. Alongside investigative journalism and producing documentaries, Declan has also presented BBC Radio Ulster's flagship news programmes, Good Morning Ulster and Evening Extra.

He is currently writing TV drama, most notably the acclaimed series McMafia.



## Politics Panel - 2.30-3.30pm

### **Niamh Smyth TD**

Deputy Niamh Smyth is currently serving her first term as a TD for the Cavan-Monaghan Constituency in Dáil Éireann after being elected on her first time running in February 2016. She has since been appointed to the Frontbench as Spokesperson for Arts and Heritage by Fianna Fáil Leader Michéal Martin TD, Uachtarán Fhianna Fáil. Deputy Smyth is also President of the Fianna Fáil Women's Network and runs regular events at Leinster House as part of her role.



### **Megan Fearon MLA**

Megan Fearon has been a Sinn Féin MLA for Newry Armagh since 2012 and is a current member of the Ard Comhairle, and in the last Assembly served as Junior Minister to Martin McGuinness in the Executive Office. A native of South Armagh, Megan is passionate about the area and its people. She regularly challenges authorities north and south to prioritise investment into the neglected border corridor.

As Six County spokesperson on Equality and Social Justice, Megan has been a champion for many equality issues in the Assembly and throughout Ireland. She is passionate about the fight for LGBT rights and protections. Megan has been vocal on the need for increasing the levels of women in politics and women's rights across the island, taking a lead role on abortion reform in the North. During her time in the Assembly Megan has been a member of the Finance, Economy and OFMDFM Committees and is current Deputy Chairperson of the Women's Caucus.



### **Carla Lockhart MLA**

Carla is a Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) politician. She has been an MLA for Upper Bann since the 2016 election, before which she served on Craigavon District Council for more than a decade, representing the Lurgan area. Carla is from a farming background and is a business graduate of Ulster University. Delivering jobs for young people is a key priority for Carla, alongside improving post-19 provision and growing the Upper Bann economy. Since being elected she has secured investment, fought for improved leisure provision and ensured lower rates in the Borough.



### **Hannah Peaker, Women's Equality Party Chief of Staff**

Hannah is Chief of Staff of the Women's Equality Party, which was established in 2015 to push women's equality to the top of the political agenda. Hannah began her career working in the voluntary sector on community empowerment, and cut her political teeth volunteering on the 2008 Obama Presidential campaign as a field organiser. Fascinated by the potential of political organising to achieve gender equality, Hannah won a scholarship to study at Harvard Kennedy School. Since that time, Hannah has worked with UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Trade Centre on gender equality. Before joining the Women's Equality Party she worked as an adviser on transparency and open government at the Cabinet Office.



### **Professor Yvonne Galligan OBE**

Yvonne is an Irish political scientist and consultant who is currently teaching at Queen's University, Belfast. She is a Professor of Comparative Politics, Founding Director of the Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics and Director of University Gender Initiative. Yvonne has published on gender equality issues in public life, writing texts such as *Contesting Politics: Women in Ireland, North and South*. In Ireland, Yvonne's research created the foundations for the introduction of the 2012 Electoral Funding (Political Parties) Act, which allowed for candidate gender quotas. She was awarded an OBE in the Birthday Honours List 2014 for services to Higher Education.

