

# THE MY WAY PROJECT CIC

IMPACT REPORT 2019-2020



# WELCOME



**The My Way Project is a new Nottingham-based social enterprise, founded by three women with diverse backgrounds and skills.**

The world is a very different place from when our journey started with the launch of our initial toolkit 'My Business My Way' in January 2019. With the dramatic impact of covid-19 now emerging, we believe it is more important than ever to support women in Nottingham; they are the backbone of our communities, bringing up our children, supporting vulnerable relatives and neighbours, yet they are often overlooked.

Having worked with women in Nottingham over the last two years, we have seen their creativity, resilience and (often-unrecognised) potential. By offering programmes of support to women (see page 8), The My Way Project can help set the scene for a positive future for our city.

With two years of 'My Way' projects under our belts, it is time to take stock and share the impact we are creating through our toolkit and workshop programmes in Nottingham. We know that sustainable social impact comes through partnerships and, while we have some amazing supporters already, we are always looking for new collaborations. So please do get in touch to see how we could work together!

**Isobel O'Neil, Alexandra Hardwick and Debbie Clarke**

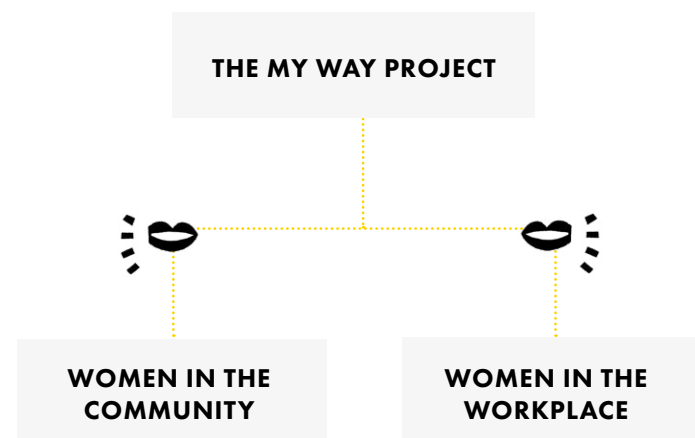
Directors, The My Way Project CIC

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Download the  
toolkit here



**Our work and impact relate to our two different audiences:**



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# WHY WE EXIST:

## WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY



We started the My Way Project to play an active role in closing the unemployment and self-employment gender gaps affecting women in the community - gaps that evidence suggests are currently widening due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



### GAP 1 LOWER INCOME WOMEN: UNEMPLOYMENT

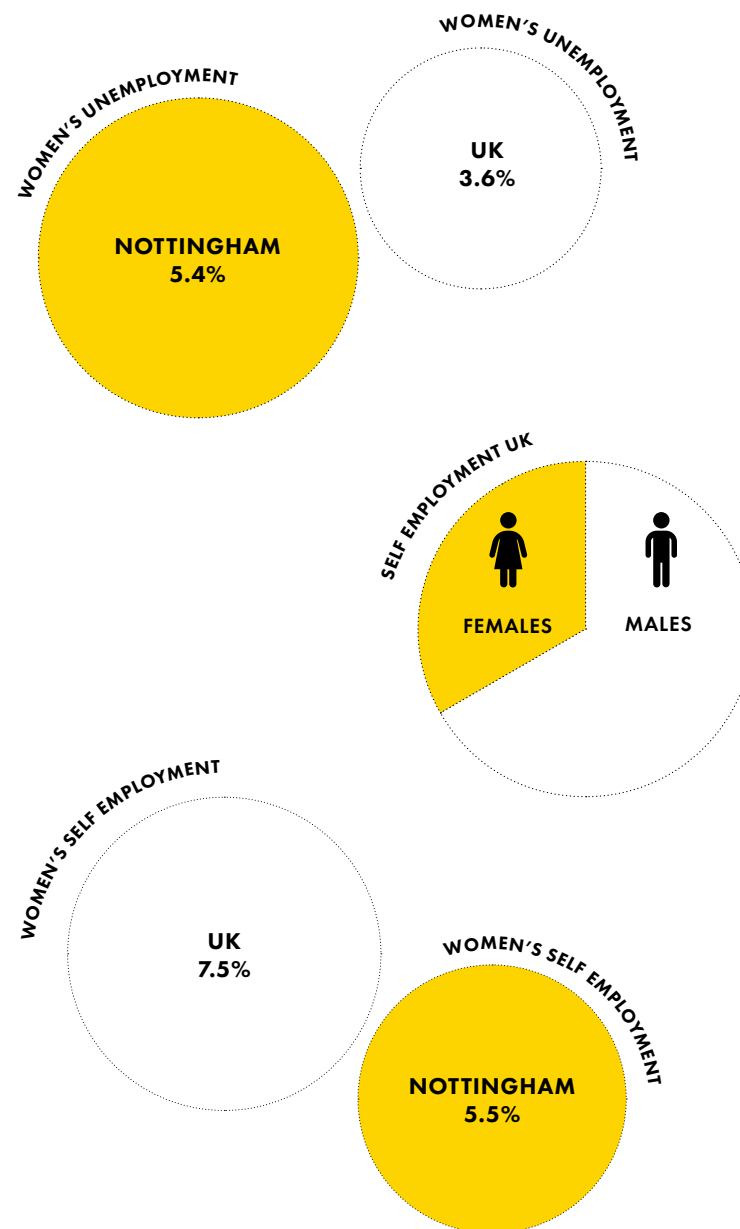
Women are more likely to be unemployed in Nottingham than UK average - 5.3% unemployment rate vs. 3.6% UK average<sup>1</sup>. The impacts of the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown are just emerging; yet between March and September 2020, female unemployment claimants in Nottingham increased by 78.2% compared to a 73.59% increase for men<sup>2</sup>.



### GAP 2 WOMEN'S SELF-EMPLOYMENT

The likelihood of women in Nottingham engaging in self-employment is lower than the national average - 5.5% women's self-employment rate in Nottingham vs. 7.5% UK<sup>1</sup>. Across the UK, two thirds of the self-employed were men<sup>3</sup>. It is accepted that women are no less able to start successful businesses than men, rather they face additional gender related barriers<sup>4</sup> suggesting women's unfulfilled enterprise potential<sup>4,5</sup>.

Sources: (1) ONS annual population survey, Jul 2019- Jun 2020; (2) ONS Claimant Count; (3) ONS Coronavirus and self-employment in the UK, April 2020; (4) Women's Enterprise Policy Group, 2020; (5) The Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, March 2019



# WHY WE EXIST:

## WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

**We tackle a third gap in relation to women who are, or have recently been, employed. Further, we are concerned with the growing evidence about the adverse impact of covid-19 on women's employment.**



### GAP 3 WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The issues facing women already in the workplace include constrained career progression, unequal access to training and development opportunities and lack of recognition among others. The gender pay gap stood at 17.3% in 2019<sup>1</sup>. There is a continuing underrepresentation of women at the very top; there are only five women CEOs in the FTSE 1002. There is better representation on FTSE 100 boards – an increase from 32% to 34.5% in the year to 1st June 2020<sup>2</sup> – but it is still unequal.



### WOMEN AND THE CORONAVIRUS CONTEXT

Women are reportedly 30% more likely than men to work in a sector required to close during the UK lockdown and so were more likely to have been furloughed<sup>3</sup>. Working mothers are 1.5 times more likely than fathers to have lost their job or quit since the start of the lockdown<sup>4</sup>. This may be unsurprising as are more likely to face precarious employment; for example, women comprise 69% of low earners, 54% of temporary employees, 54% of workers on zero-hours contracts, and 59% of the part-time self-employed<sup>5</sup>.

Sources: (1) ONS Gender pay gap in the UK: 2019; (2) The Female FTSE Board Report 2020, Cranfield University; (3) Institute for Fiscal Studies, April 2020; (4) Institute for Fiscal Studies, May 2020; (5) Women's Budget Group, April 2020



# WHY DO WE EXIST?

**The My Way Project is a response to the evidence about the plight of women in relation to work and enterprise.**

We exist to assist individual women in evaluating and pursuing the work and entrepreneurship pathways most suited to them.  
We exist to facilitate equal access to career and self-employment opportunities for women across Nottingham and beyond.

# WHAT WE OFFER



## PURPOSE

Our mission is to support women develop so they can work in a way that works best for them.



## VISION

We want to see a world with equal access to career and self-employment opportunities for all women.

## OUR FOUR AREAS OF WORK

- **Toolkits**  
We create toolkits for women that combine personal and career development into self-reflection and goal setting tools.
- **Workshop Programmes**  
We run workshops programmes to support women develop confidence and motivation and to build up entrepreneurial, leadership and business skills.
- **Community Partnerships**  
We collaborate with local community groups and organisations to ensure appropriate signposting for women across Nottingham and the region.
- **Advocating for Women**  
We join others to advocate for the inclusion women in business and across the working world.

## OUR FIVE AREAS OF INTENDED IMPACT



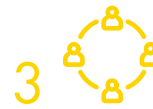
### Enhancing self-confidence

We work on nurturing women's confidence through our self-reflection toolkits and workshops.



### Empowering decision-making

We help women take action towards shaping a working life that works for them.



### Creating supportive communities

We foster environments where women come to together to support each other and build friendships.



### Redefining visions of success

We support women to work out, pursue and recognise achieving their own version of success.



### Building entrepreneurship and workplace skills

We work on developing skills such as networking, using social media, pitching and other transferable skills.

# OUR IMPACT



## Enhancing self-confidence

### Being authentic

Before our programme 37% strongly agreed that they were able to talk freely about their own values. This increased to 70% afterwards.\*

### Balancing needs

When joining us, only 11.1% strongly agreed they could balance their own needs with those of others. This increased to 25% following the workshops.\*

### What they say

"This has given me so much more confidence and self-belief that I can run a creative business from home that fits around my kids."\*\*

"Since the course I've established myself more in a leadership role with my own business and I feel more confidence when interacting with corporate clients"\*



## Empowering decision-making

### Initiating change

Initially, 25.9% strongly agreed that "If I want to change something in my life, I initiate the transition process" but after the programme that increased to 65%.\*

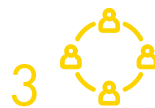
### Reaching goals

Before the workshops 14.80% strongly agreed that "I know what I need to do to get started towards reaching my goals" Afterwards, this increased to 40% - an increase of 170%.\*

### What they say

"It has completely framed my business planning, giving me more of a structure to look at my business objectively, rather than just muddling along".\*\*

"I've spend 2 years telling my jobcentre coach it was what I wanted to do but I never made any progress until now" \*\*



## Creating supportive communities

### Sense of belonging

55% already agreed or strongly agreed that they belonged in the business world, this jumped to 80% after the programme: a 54.5% increase.\*

### What they say

"Loved the tutors, plus listening to other women and their business adventures."\*\*

"Through taking part in My Business My Way I accessed a wealth of support, on many levels, from female entrepreneurs whom I wouldn't have met normally".\*

"So important to be able to have a safe space to talk about your business, knowing the group is here for you, to help you".\*



## Redefining visions of success

### Sense of achievement

Before starting the programme, 37% strongly agreed that they experienced a sense of achievement through their business; this grew to 60% strongly agreeing after the programme.\*

### What they say

"Really useful way of looking at what success is. I'm leaving actually feeling a 'success' and I came in feeling almost like a failure" \*\*



## Building entrepreneurship and workplace skills

### What they say

The facilitators' knowledge and experience in their own field were all top quality and their resources, engaging talks and group work made it all highly applicable to my own business and life."\*

# OUR IMPACT

**400+**  
participants  
supported

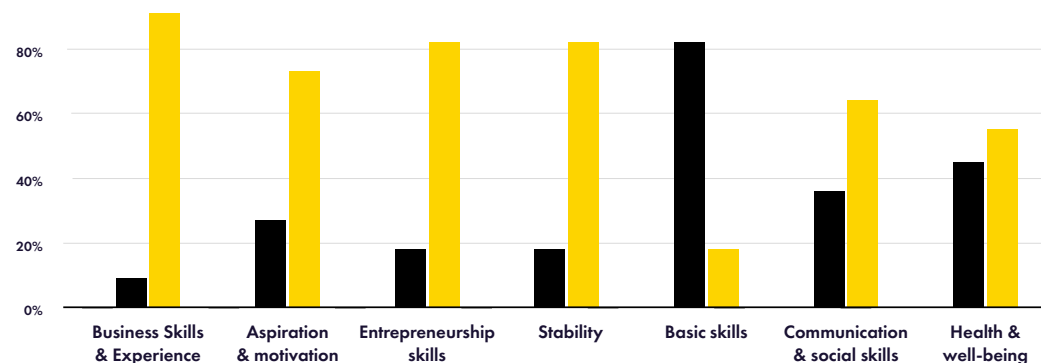
**1000+**  
toolkits shared

**200+**  
feedback forms  
received

## IMPACT: WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

We interviewed the participants before and after our Smallwood sponsored programme. This chart shows the % changes.

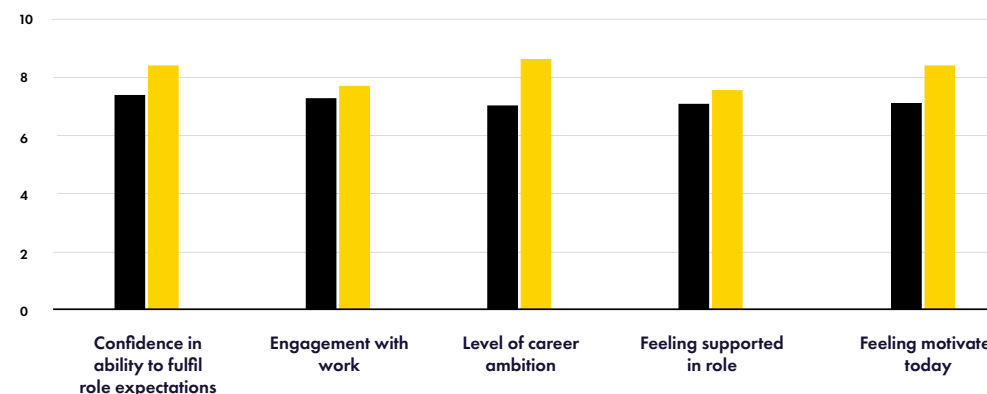
□ Decreased  
■ Stayed the same  
■ Increased



## IMPACT: WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Women surveyed before and after our IWD workshop at WBA UK. Chart shows the increases in scores out of 10.

■ Start of workshop  
■ After workshop



The Women of WBA-UK Business Resource Group (BRG) took part in the My Way Challenge in Spring 2020. As a BRG our mission is to create an environment where women thrive, inspiring them to reach their desired potential and the My Way Challenge, providing a topic for reflection each week, really supports our mission.

We had an overwhelming response with over 70 of our members taking part in the 10-week programme. Our members saw it as a great opportunity to take time out to reflect and focus on self-development. Feedback from colleagues was so positive, they really liked that the content was sent out weekly and so it didn't feel like it was too much at once.

**Kat Robinson**

Vice Chair of the Women of WBA – UK Business Resource Group  
Senior Business Development Manager at Boots UK

# PROGRAMMES



**It's our mission to reach as many women in Nottingham and the surrounding region as possible, raising their confidence, building entrepreneurial skills and ultimately supporting them towards financial resilience.**

On pages 3 and 4 we shared the three gender gaps that we set out to address and here we outline three programmes aligned to each. Our programmes can be tailored further to meet the specific needs of funders and clients as we like to work collaboratively to develop and deliver targeted solutions.

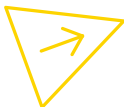
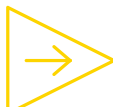

Our social enterprise business model is designed so that those who can pay for our programmes do so and this supports our free-at-point-of-delivery offer to lower income women. Whether a grant funder or corporate client, by funding our work, you'll be making a difference both to the lives of individual women and their families and to the future prosperity of Nottingham and the region beyond.



**If you are a grant funder or organization interested in working with us, please get in touch.**

We love to build partnerships and are open to new collaborations.

**[theymywayprojectcic@gmail.com](mailto:theymywayprojectcic@gmail.com)**

	 <b>Find My Way</b> Re-start and Pre-Start Programme for Business and Career	 <b>My Business My Way</b> Start-up and Entrepreneurial Programmes	 <b>My Career My Way</b> Bespoke Programme
<b>Who?</b>	Lower income women e.g. unemployed, single mums, carers, returnees, those made redundant.	Women who run their own business.	Women employed in organizations.
<b>What?</b>	We support and empower women to develop and pursue work opportunities that work best for them while building enterprise skills.	We support women entrepreneurs to build confidence and motivation as they work out their versions of success and the steps to achieve it.	We support women to reflect and evaluate their careers, build their enterprising skills and take steps to achieve their success.
<b>How?</b>	We use our My Way toolkit and six weekly sessions, concluding with 1-2-1 coaching.	With the My Business My Way toolkit and six weekly sessions, including peer coaching.	We use The My Career My Way toolkit and work with clients to develop a workshop programme. We can also deliver a facilitated My Way Challenge, to be used by peer-to-peer support groups.
<b>Extras?</b>	We facilitate a social media group and support meet-ups.	Participants can join our social media group and meet-ups.	Participants can join our social media group and meet-ups.



# THEIR STORIES



Single parent to two young daughters and having a background working in IT helplines for a large retailer, Sam had just graduated as a mature student from NTU and was looking to “work for herself”. The timing of our Smallwood Trust My Business My Way programme was perfect for Sam; she was keen to refine her ideas and take the next steps to setting up a business.

Sam was experiencing a bit of anxiety about her future and was looking to find like-minded people. Immediately, Sam recognized the strength of our all women programme: “I came into the sessions and I was noticing that we are all just people, all on our own journeys doing our own things... there is no need to have this anxiety about having to meet expectations.” Since joining the programme, Sam has gone from strength to strength – and her new business is making great progress. Raw Nature launched at the start of lockdown and is currently focusing on selling Elderberry Syrup, an immunity boosting supplement. Sam has found the confidence to follow her dream “Now that I have done this with Raw Nature I feel like that was everything just falling into place. I feel good about it.”



Abigail came to the UK from a conflict region and during her time here she developed her sewing skills and passion for making clothes and accessories. Abigail had been on several sewing courses in Nottingham and heard about the My Business My Way programme through one of the course leaders.

Having spent time at home raising two young children, Abigail signed up to the course with a motivation to explore being self-employed: “I thought instead of going out there to help someone build their business, it’s better I do something for myself, start from somewhere and build my own business”. Abigail told us how the programme helped her: “coming to the workshops really opened my eyes to so many things and I learnt a lot. So having confidence and believing in myself, meeting new people. I learnt a lot from you guys.” Abigail receives complements on her creations all the time and can’t wait to be able to get her business up and running.

# THEIR STORIES



Having left a senior job in a blue-chip organisation, Jennifer founded LittleThingsDigital.co.uk as she was looking to be able to spend more time on what's important, to base her work on her own priorities and make more of a positive impact than what had been possible as an employee.

Jennifer joined our University of Nottingham sponsored My Business My Way (MBMW) 2019 programme and found the people she met to be one of the biggest positives: "the supportive environment was the best thing about the course". Consequently, Jennifer has already collaborated on a client project with another MBMW entrepreneur.

Jennifer also found the structure of the course beneficial: "it was a little and often rather than an overwhelming commitment". Joining the programme has helped Jennifer recognise her own achievements which "was brilliant from a confidence and support point of view". Since finishing the programme, Jennifer told us "I've continued to prioritise the things most important to me whilst making a positive impact for my clients. That flexibility has been priceless during the last 6 months as I've won new clients and retained existing ones. I treasure the network I'm building and am grateful for the part My Business My Way played in that".



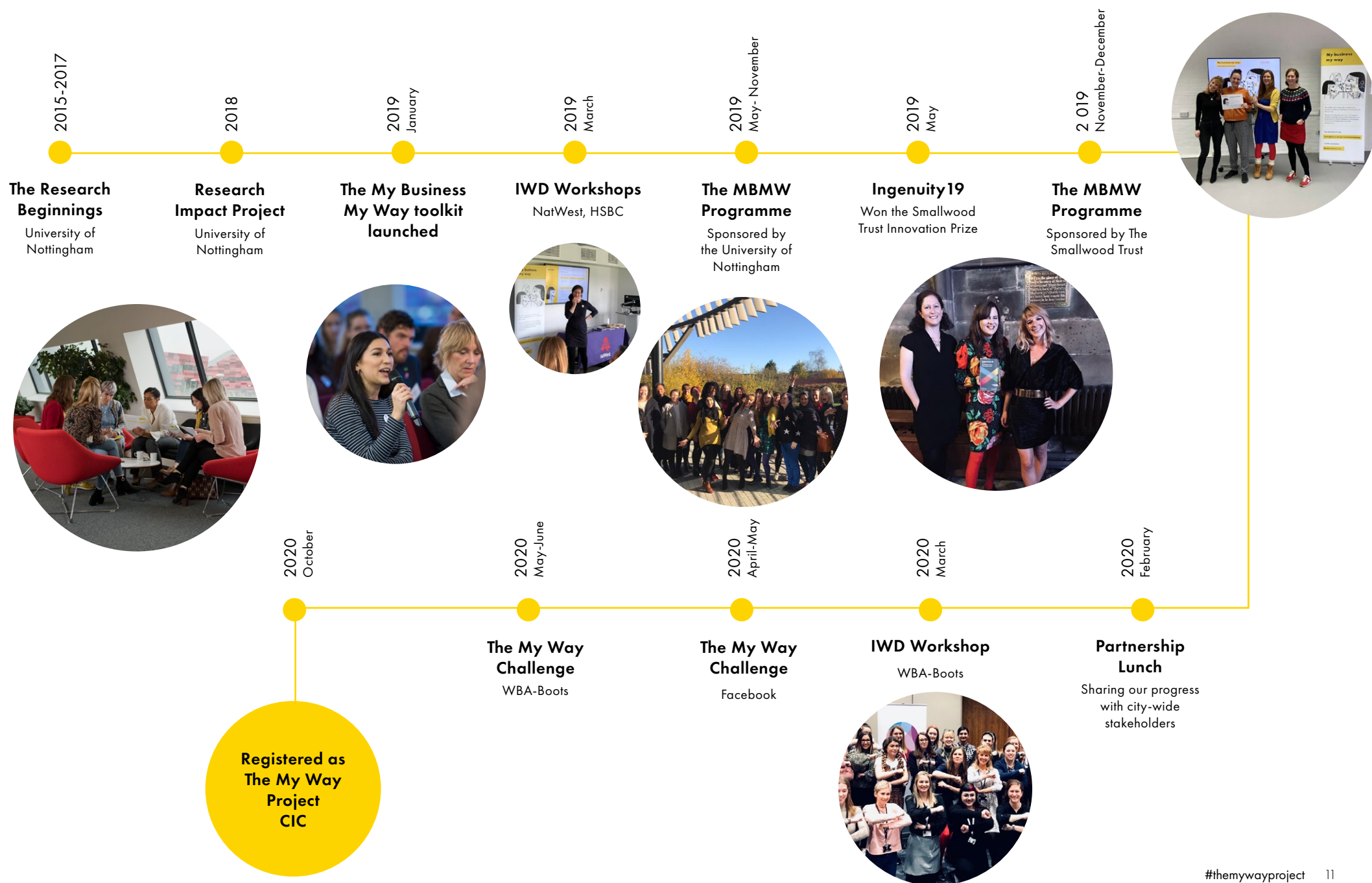
## WALGREEN BOOTS ALLIANCE

As part of International Women's Day on March 6 2020, the My Way team delivered a fantastic workshop for the Women of WBA-UK Business Resource Group. The session was attended by around 50 BRG members and was very well received. Members said they found the workshop inspirational and subsequently we had an increased intake for the 10 week My Way challenge.

The workshop supported BRG members to self-reflect professionally and personally, considering what their successes and future aspirations are. The My Way workshop was a perfect fit to support our members who may have been at the beginning of their career journeys, but also those wanting to develop further. It supported our aim as a BRG to empower women to achieve their desired potential throughout their career. I attended the workshop myself and found it empowering to be with supportive women, and the BRG looks forward to seeing the impact the My Way team continue to make.

Claire Wilkinson  
Membership Lead for the BRG and Reward & MI Analyst,  
Walgreen Boots Alliance, Global Brands.

# OUR TIMELINE





# ABOUT THE MY WAY PROJECT

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**Dr Isobel O'Neil**  
University of Nottingham



**Alexandra Hardwick**  
Line and Dot Creative



**Debbie Clarke**  
Debbiedoodah

**The My Way Project CIC was born through a collaboration to develop an innovative way to help women who run businesses.**

We wanted to help women avoid having to follow masculinized norms of building and growing businesses. The result was the first My Business My Way toolkit that launched in early 2019.

Alexandra, Debbie and Isobel, the three My Way Project directors, each bring a wealth of lived experiences in the world of entrepreneurship.

Alexandra started her own creative agency in 2014 and has designed a wealth of social impact campaigns with charities and community projects. Alexandra is passionate about making a difference to peoples lives in her community.

Debbie was a single mum, living on income support and fighting cancer before starting her entrepreneurial journey in 2013. Now Debbie has supported 1,000s of businesses and regularly delivers courses for entrepreneurs locally and nationwide.

Isobel (PhD) brings over 10 years of experience researching and teaching all things entrepreneurship at the University of Nottingham to the team. Isobel loves building partnerships to ensure women in the community can be supported.

The My Way Project CIC has had many highlights since we launched our first toolkit. We've hosted many workshops including with NatWest, worked with women in business at Boots, run a 6 months in-person programme for female entrepreneurs & a 10-week online challenge during lockdown.

But being awarded the Smallwood Trust Innovation Prize - at Ingenuity19 in May 2019 - had the greatest impact on our thinking. Working with The Smallwood Trust, we delivered a programme for lower income women in Nottingham helping them realise their business start-up dreams. This set the direction for us launching as a CIC.

The My Way Project would like to thank people from the following organisations who have supported us: