

## **SistersIN**

### **Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 30 June 2025**

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The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 30 June 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

#### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

##### **Objectives and aims**

Our mission is to enable, empower and develop female pupils in education to become the leaders of tomorrow; to help them discover their full potential & open new possibilities for their professional journeys by building leadership capability and confidence.

SistersIN has created the signature SistersIN Leadership Programme, an 8-month development journey for sixth form girls to help build their confidence and broaden their career perspectives. The programme has 3 core elements:

- Bespoke leadership skills training
- Project leadership experience
- Mentoring from female business leaders.

In crafting the programme, we sought to create something that would have a long-lasting impact.

Each element of the programme was designed to be practical and provide an opportunity for pupils to apply the skills they learned. The programme exposed the students to different careers that exist today, connected them to the world of work and to female leaders who have shared their career journeys and personal leadership stories with them. A critical part of the SistersIN programme is to boost the pupils' self-confidence. We want them to leave the programme inspired as to all the career opportunities that lie in front of them and knowledgeable that they can choose to step up as leaders in whatever path they pursue.

##### **Public benefit**

The Trustees of SistersIN have fully complied with the Public Benefit requirements as set out in the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory guidance on public benefit.

The benefit which flows from the organisation purpose is an improved level of education and work experience, increased confidence and broadened career prospects. These benefits will be evidenced through feedback from schools and pupils and regular internal evaluation of our services. There is no possibility of any harm arising from any of the purposes. The charities beneficiaries are female school students in Northern Ireland aged 16-18. There is no private benefit.

Beyond the direct impact SistersIN has on the pupils, leaders and organisations involved, we have seen the programme create a ripple effect of positive impact in communities and beyond.

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#### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

##### **Charitable activities**

Foreword from Peter Dobbin, Chair of SistersIN

It is with great pride that we reflect on what has been a landmark year in the SistersIN journey. Now in completing our third year, the growth of this programme has been both remarkable and organic, fuelled by an unwavering belief in the potential of our young women and the power of meaningful mentorship. What began as a bold idea is now a proven model, empowering almost 700 girls this year across 49 schools—each one inspired, equipped, and ready to lead.

This year we also welcomed two significant additions to our leadership team. Gillian McKeown joined as our Director of Operations and Development at the beginning of the programme year, bringing strategic vision and tireless energy to our mission. As the year closed, we were delighted to bring Hannah Fitzsimmons onboard as our first Educational Programme Manager—a vital role as we deepen our impact in classrooms and build resources for the future.

To all our mentors, partners, educators, and supporters—thank you for believing in this vision. Your commitment is changing lives. Together, we are shaping not just futures, but a more equal and inspiring society.

Peter Dobbin  
Chair of SistersIN

##### **Charitable activities**

###### **We build skills:**

The Leadership Skills Curriculum, is delivered by teachers, supported by SistersIN, within the participating schools. This 10-module programme was intensive, challenging and rewarding for the students involved.

###### **We give opportunities:**

The Leadership Project, undertaken by each girl, unearthed a wealth of innovation, creativity, and talent. The wide range of projects enriched the school curriculum and has had an impact on both the school and the local community.

###### **We build networks:**

Each girl was matched with a female mentor in a leadership role. This mentoring was to prove as powerful and rewarding for the female leader as it was for the student. Regular virtual and face-to-face meetings took place, including a job shadowing day, when the girls followed the role of a senior leader in each organisation. This sparked professional conversations between mentors and mentees leading to connections that we hope will endure.

###### **We build confidence:**

"My mentor showed me that no matter how much you think you can't do something, there is always a way." Pupil

"The biggest topic featuring in the pupil's applications is confidence. Some really struggle with confidence, social anxiety and self-esteem and for them, this programme is a massive step outside of their comfort zone. Even the first engagement with their mentor can be a real stretch. Helping them break down some of these barriers was key, right down to having them deliver their end of programme speech to the next cohort, something many would not have thought possible at the start of the journey." Teacher

"Our organisation is mainly engineering focused, and our leadership team is only 23% female. We're committed to driving a culture change but it's not enough to just talk about things, we have to take action. SistersIN is a very practical way to help us make a difference and create greater awareness of both STEM roles but also roles in STEM organisations" Mentor

###### **The programme in numbers:**

Since launching in 2022, SistersIN has grown into a powerful movement, creating more opportunities for girls across Northern Ireland. In just three years, we've dramatically increased our reach, empowering more young women than ever to lead with confidence and purpose.

In the 24-25 year, we had 659 pupils engaged in the programme, from 49 schools across Northern Ireland. Together, they received 7600 hours of leadership lessons, 3240 hours of mentoring and each participated in a job shadow day hosted by their mentor.

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We're also delighted to see more pupils from diverse backgrounds participating in the programme. We've seen a 77% increase in schools with medium & high numbers of pupils receiving free school meals in the last 3 years.

SistersIN has reached 5 times the number of schools participating since its inception in 2022 and increased the number of pupils from west of the Bann by 32% since last year.

While growing significantly, we're also still creating a great experience for our Pupils, Mentors & Teachers involved in the programme. In their end of year evaluation, the charity scored 4.46/ 5 for overall quality of programme.

#### Our Impact - On Pupils

SistersIN was created with pupils at the heart and centre.

SistersIN empowers girls at a pivotal stage in their education by building confidence, deepening self-awareness, and opening their eyes to future careers and the world of work. Through a holistic programme, we connect them with inspiring women leaders, offer hands-on leadership experience, and equip them with essential skills to thrive in life and work.

- 4.38/5 stated that the programme helped them reach their objectives, and the overall programme rating was 4.47/5.
  - 97% of pupils have applied the leadership skills from lessons
  - 86% pupils felt the investment was worthwhile
  - 84% of mentors & 97% of teachers saw an improvement across all 10 leadership skills
- "My mentor showed me to never give up, and always shoot for the stars" Pupil

"My mentor helped me to improve my confidence by helping me realise I already have confidence it just needs to be strengthened. She taught me to pick out the most inspiring qualities from my role models and apply them to myself." Pupil

"At the start, the girls feel they need to be mentored by someone in their chosen field/industry but they realise quickly that the skills and insights they can gain from their mentor are so transferable and tangible, it really doesn't matter what their mentor does for work." Teacher

#### Our Impact - On Mentors

In 24-25, 649 mentors joined us in championing the SistersIN mission - each playing a vital role in shaping the next generation of female leaders. From first-time mentors to seasoned professionals, they all share one powerful truth: the experience can be transformative not only for the girls, but for the mentors themselves.

- 41% work in STEM professions
- 80% work in private sector
- 77% say the programme met or exceeded expectations
- 72% gained insights about tomorrow's workforce

"Being part of SistersIN has been equal parts heartwarming and eye-opening, I came in hoping to make a difference, but I think I've learned just as much from my mentee as she has from me. It's been an absolute joy to watch these brilliant young women find their voices and grow in confidence, the future's in very good hands!" Mentor

"Involvement with SistersIN, has driven us to seek out our female leaders in the business, helping us build our networks and connections internally. This has helped us see that we have a group of really talented senior leaders in our business, who can help us with internal mentorship and development programmes." Mentor

"This was a great opportunity for me to develop my own skills and to hear more about what it's like to be a young woman in today's world." Mentor

#### Our Impact - On Communities

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As part of the SistersIN Leadership Programme, each girl leads a project, either in school or the community. This year, we took a deep dive to understand the impact these projects are having on the wider school population and the communities they live in.

Project topics included: school clubs, charity, mental health / health, mentoring/ tutoring, event. Sports, environmental, career options. STEM, inclusion, life skills, women and girls.

- 57% of students are engaging in projects that are creating a long-term impact
- 23% of projects impact the wider community

The Ripple effect:

On average, each pupil impacted 20 people throughout their project - that's 13,475 people across this year's cohort!

#### **Industry Partners**

At SistersIN, our partnership model is designed to reflect the depth of commitment and impact our supporters contribute to the programme. SistersIN received monetary, in-kind contributions and expertise from:

- 2 Platinum Partners
- 9 Gold Partners
- 10 Silver partners
- 3 Bronze Partners
- 2 Collaboration Partners
- Various Funders via grants and donations.

#### **2024/2025 Highlights**

Some organisations went a step further and provided unique leadership project opportunities and events throughout the programme year. Three of our Founding Partners delivered inspiring events for the SistersIN pupils to attend.

The ICC, Belfast supported the staff team and a group students with the organisation of the SistersIN Celebration Event, including behind the scenes insight to working in large scale events and marketing.

Our Inspiring Entrepreneurs Day saw Over 350 SistersIN girls gathered at The Inspiring Entrepreneurs event in City Hall to be inspired by the leadership journeys of two phenomenal female entrepreneurs, Alice Thompson and Dr. Pragya Sharma. Thanks to the unwavering support of our Founding and Platinum Sponsor, Danske Bank UK.

Queen's University Belfast hosted another SistersINSPIRE event. This is an initiative designed to inspire and empower young women by showcasing leadership, career pathways, and education opportunities..

"2048: The Future Starts Now" event took place for a second year in the Senate Chamber at Stormont, which saw 12 incredible SistersIN pupils stood in the Senate Chamber at Stormont, delivering powerful, thought-provoking speeches on their vision for Northern Ireland in 2048. With no notes, they spoke passionately for five minutes each on vital issues, their confidence, passion, and composure were truly inspiring!

In April, the SistersIN Closing Celebration was attended by First Minister, Michelle O'Neill and Deputy First Minister, Emma-Little-Pengelly, where they delivered keynotes speeches, and announced that they are set to become mentors as part of the SistersIN Leadership Programme.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### **Financial position**

The charity's financial position is reviewed on a regular basis by the board. The charity has an annual independent examination performed by an external accountant. The charity income for the 2025 year was £192,253 (2024: £197,800) and the expenditure was £134,675 (2024: £64,770) which in turn results in a surplus of £57,578 (2024: £133,030) in the year. Unrestricted funds at the year end totalled £205,797.

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#### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

##### **Principal funding sources**

The charity is funded entirely from contributions from grant funders, its participating Industry Partners and Schools. A huge thanks goes out to all of our Grant funders, Industry Partners and Schools who have supported us throughout the year.

We couldn't have done it without you.

##### **Reserves policy**

The trustees recognise that it is necessary to hold reserves in order to offset the effects of fluctuation on incoming resources and thereby secure the continued viability of the Charity beyond the immediate future. In keeping with best practice, it is the aim of the charity to hold free reserves which equate to three to six months operating costs.

#### **FUTURE PLANS**

Looking ahead to 2025/26, SistersIN is entering an exciting new phase. The charity is ready to transition from a start-up mindset to a model of sustainable growth. This means strengthening our foundations through long-term partnerships, expanding opportunities for our girls and mentors, and actively exploring ways to broaden access and impact. From potential recognition accreditation routes to new resource offerings and programme enhancements, the possibilities are vast. We will also continue to evolve at governance level, welcoming new Board members who bring fresh insights and help us steward this next chapter with ambition and care.

Our Priorities for 2025/26:

- Recruitment of two key roles to strengthen delivery - Partnerships Manager and Programme Administration Coordinator
- Appointment of new Board members to bring additional expertise, strategic insight, and governance support.
- Development of a library of resources for schools, mentors, and pupils to enhance programme support and consistency.
- Continued focus on enhanced training and support for mentors and schools.
- Implementation of PushFar mentoring platform to streamline mentor-pupil matching, communication, and tracking.
- Research and scope accreditation options to formalise and add value to participants' experiences.
- Research and scope how to widen access to the programme

To all our mentors, partners, educators, and supporters-thank you for believing in this vision. Your commitment is changing lives. Together, we are shaping not just futures, but a more equal and inspiring society.

#### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **Governing document**

SistersIN is a company limited by guarantee which was incorporated on 25th May 2022. It was registered as a charity with the NI Charity Commission as from 31st August 2022.

The company is governed by a Board of Trustees which operates as detailed in the company's governing document, the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

##### **Recruitment and appointment of new trustees**

Due to the nature of the charity's work the trustees seek to ensure that these needs are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the trustee body. To enhance the potential pool, trustees are requested to provide a list of their skills (and update it each year) and in the event of particular skills lacking or being lost due to retirement, individuals are approached to offer themselves for election.

##### **Organisational structure**

The company is governed by a Board of Trustees which operates as detailed in the company's governing document, the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The trustees meet on a regular basis to review all aspects of the charity. The committee is made up of a number of members with a shared vision, commitment and passion for achieving the objectives of the organisation. Members come with a range of skills crucial to the management of the organisation. Director of operations, Mrs Gillian McKeown, was appointed by the board to administer the day to day operations of the charity.

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#### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **Induction and training of new trustees**

New Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision making processes, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. They meet key employees and other Trustees. The Trustees and management committee are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

#### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

##### **Registered Company number**

NI688523 (Northern Ireland)

##### **Registered Charity number**

109051

##### **Registered office**

Down Business Centre  
46 Belfast Road  
Downpatrick  
Co. Down  
BT30 9UP

##### **Trustees**

P Cochrane Chartered Accountant (resigned 17/9/2025)  
P Dobbin School Principal  
Mrs A Press Director  
Miss C Mageean Professional Athlete  
Mrs O O'Reilly Director  
Professor K Morrison Dean of Education  
F O'Donnell (appointed 17/9/2025)  
R McConnell (appointed 17/9/2025)  
I B Jeffers (appointed 17/9/2025)  
Mrs T M Breslin (appointed 17/9/2025)

##### **Independent Examiner**

M.B.McGrady & Co  
Chartered Accountants  
Rathmore House  
52 St Patricks Avenue  
Downpatrick  
Co. Down  
BT30 6DS

#### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The trustees (who are also the directors of SistersIN for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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for the Year Ended 30 June 2025**

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**STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES - continued**

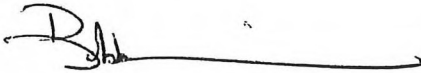
Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law, the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law).

Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 12 January 2026 and signed on its behalf by:



P Dobbin - Trustee