

# AT THE HEART OF PHILANTHROPY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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## 1. What are your thoughts, in general, on charitable giving?

I believe charitable giving is an essential component of society. It's what makes us human and provides the thread that connects us and engages us with people, needs and causes that we might not normally be exposed to. Giving comes very naturally to me and I am constantly amazed at the power a modest, timely intervention can have.

## 2. Is your giving personal or corporate or a combination of both?

A combination of both. As Executive Director of the Lloyds Bank Foundation for Northern Ireland I oversee a range of grant programmes to enable people who are disabled or disadvantaged play a fuller role within their local communities. This year the Foundations funded by Lloyds Banking Group celebrate 30 years in operation and over that period have donated £575 million - the largest corporate Foundation in the UK. I also give personally in a variety of ways - money, mentoring skills, volunteering and fundraising.

## 3. How do you give to charity: monetarily, your own time as a volunteer or your specialist skills?

I am a founding member of Ireland's first giving Circle - Give Inc. We are a group of business women and we donate £1 per day. We support children, young people and women and our pooled donations have now exceeded £50,000. It's a wonderful feeling to work collaboratively with other like-minded individuals. I also serve on the Boards of two charitable organisations - Women in Business NI and the Belfast International Arts Festival. Good governance is the key to a healthy and thriving voluntary sector and organisations are always keen to recruit a Board with a wide skills base.

## 4. What types of causes do you favour and why?

I support a wide range of causes and this changed along the way. As a young person I was a big supporter of animal welfare organisations and then I added to that with an interest in children and young people. I am the Northern Ireland Ambassador for The Diana Awards and it is always humbling to see young people recognised for their voluntary efforts be it around anti-bullying initiatives or fundraising for causes or individuals they believe in.

## 5. Are there specific charities or causes that you give to regularly? How do you choose which to support?

I'm delighted that I have just recently realised a long-term ambition to set up my own grant-making Foundation. It is a donor-directed fund and will be managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. I have called it The Hope For More Foundation and it will increasingly become the focus of my charitable efforts. I established the Foundation to encourage children and early-teens to get into the good practice of giving. The thinking behind it is that if people are shown the benefits of small-scale planned giving at an early age, they are more likely to incorporate it into their lives as they grow. The potential for pocket-money, micro-giving and giving circles is huge and hopefully this initiative will translate into more strategic giving in future generations.

## 6. Do you believe that companies and individuals have a duty to help others? If yes, why?

I do of course. But I believe it should be more than just a marketing exercise. It should be self-motivated and not a requirement. Giving is not and should never be like paying taxes for example. The companies which support their employees in their fundraising and volunteering activities will always be more effective than those which direct or instruct. Individuals expect businesses to support the communities in which they operate. I am particularly interested in the development of social enterprise which I support both personally and professionally.



## 7. What is your message to business people who may be thinking about becoming more involved in strategic philanthropy?

Giving needs to be strategic in order to maximise the impact it can have. It can often be difficult choosing just one or two causes or issues to support as there is so much need locally and internationally. But it pays in the long run to select the causes you want to support carefully, to build up a mutually beneficial relationship and to add value to your gifts of time, talent or treasure.

## 8. Giving Northern Ireland was set up to champion philanthropy. Why do you think it is important that there is an organisation that helps businesses and individuals think more strategically about giving?

As Strategic Advisor to Giving Northern Ireland I would be biased! We have witnessed a great appetite for all of the programmes we have been operating. Our Safe Spaces dinners provide the opportunity for High Net Worth Individuals to discuss philanthropy with their peers, we are skilling up the voluntary sector by providing training in major gifts, we are working collaboratively with sister organisations on the annual NI Philanthropy Fortnight programme, we are supporting businesses as they develop giving strategies and we are working on international philanthropy initiatives like Giving Tuesday. At a time of unprecedented funding cuts it has never been more important for society to support those in need. Giving is good for business and good for the soul!