

Women Take the Top Prizes as 540 New Businesses Start-Up across Fingal.

More than 100 well-wishers came out to celebrate the success of entrepreneurs supported by Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP) in County Hall, Swords. The event on Thursday 5th October was to mark the contribution that sole traders and small-business owners make to the economic development of Fingal.

Adeline O' Brien (new CEO of BAP) outlined that in the past two years "70% of new businesses were started by men and 30% by women, so despite talk of a level-playing field between men and women, the facts are that we still have a long way to go. In any case 100% of the winners today are women".

and the awardees were:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 st place: Anna McGuire | Anna McGuire runs Ana Mac Bespoke Dressmaker and Ana's Sewing School. |
| 2 nd place: Agnes Chvojka | Agnes Chvojka is a food photographer and food marketing agency |
| 3 rd place: Emma Pierce | The Emma Louise Dance Academy is run by Emma Louise Pierce. |

Adeline then explained that this awards event was the perfect opportunity to launch the Blanchardstown Area Partnership Enterprise Report. The research in the report covers the period April 2015 – December 2016 but Adeline was quick to point out that the service has accelerated in 2017 also.

The main findings from the research period combined with the results so far this year show that in a two-year period BAP enterprise service has:

- worked with almost 2000 individuals,
- delivered hundreds of courses across Fingal and
- supported over 540 to start up a new business .

The findings of the research as outlined in the report tell us that the most common sectors of the economy where new businesses were created were:

- trades and construction,
- professional services and
- transportation and storage

Cllr Kieran Dennison (Chairperson of BAP) described the importance of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and the Short-Term Enterprise Allowance and how it contributes to local economic development, explaining that "94% of persons who set up in business did so via the these schemes and 92% of those are sole-traders".

Adeline then went on to highlight how the scheme is a legitimate alternative to traditional employment for people because

“70% of people who came to us were long-term unemployed, so this clearly demonstrates the importance of these schemes in this enterprise space and for promoting entrepreneurship at a local level in Fingal”.

The Mayor of Fingal Mary McCamley spoke about how the enterprise service in BAP offers a range of supports including courses, workshops and one-to-one mentoring for individuals who want to or have already started a business, who are considered to be a target group. The Mayor then explained that Blanchardstown Area Partnership deliver enterprise support to individuals primarily through SICAP.

The current SICAP programme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development. SICAP’s vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community-development approaches and targeted supports. The programme commenced on 1 April 2015 and will run until December 2017. This programme is overseen and managed at county level by the Fingal Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Over the lifetime of SICAP and previous programmes, BAP has helped the government with its targets for economic growth and job creation.