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NICHE

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to my very first issue as editor of Niche! After more than 12 years working as a journalist, this truly feels like a 'pinch me' moment. To be leading a magazine that celebrates the people, businesses and communities I've loved writing about for so long is both an honour and a joy.

What a season to begin with – we've just celebrated the Niche Business Awards, one of the biggest nights in our calendar. This year's Bollywood theme lit up Athena with colour, energy, and spectacle. It was an unforgettable evening that reminded us why Leicester's business community is so inspiring, and I feel privileged to capture some of that spirit within these pages.

I'm also thrilled about our cover story. Harry Singh of Fine & Country is bringing a fresh, bold approach to the luxury housing market in Leicestershire. With the strategic precision of a chess master, he's making moves that are shaping the future of high-end living – and his journey is one you won't want to miss.

This issue also shines a light on the importance of community and wellbeing. We highlight Small Business Saturday, championing the independents that add so much character to our high streets. We've dedicated space in the magazine to mental health features, offering guidance and support as we head into the darker months – a time when many people need it most.

Of course, we couldn't ignore the sparkle of the season. Inside you'll find our guides to Christmas in Leicester, Diwali celebrations and ideas for getting cosy as autumn turns to winter. From festive markets and twinkling lights to simple ways of creating warmth at home, this issue is all about embracing comfort, celebration and connection.

Starting my journey as editor at such a vibrant and festive time of year feels incredibly special. Thank you for being part of it – and here's to many more inspiring stories together.

Emily

#FindYourNiche

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NICHE

M A G A Z I N E



When I launched Niche, it was little more than an idea, a belief that business could be celebrated in a way that was bold, fresh, and unapologetically different. What began as a local magazine has grown into something far bigger than I ever imagined. Together, we've told stories that mattered, championed businesses big and small, and built a community that feels more like family than readership.

This October issue is special - it marks my last as owner of Niche. Saying that feels surreal. Niche has been part of my life, my identity, and my heartbeat for so many years. Handing it over is bittersweet, but it's the right time. The magazine is becoming part of the global Niche brand, and with new ownership comes new opportunities, new voices, and a bigger stage for the stories we've always cared so deeply about.

I want to say thank you - to the readers who picked us up issue after issue, to the businesses who trusted us with their stories, and to the team who poured their creativity and graft into every page. You've made Niche what it is today.

While this chapter closes for me, Niche's story is far from over. It will continue to evolve, grow, and shine on a global scale. And I'll be cheering it on, proud of what we've achieved together and excited for what's next.

With love and gratitude,

Jenny Cross

Founder, Niche Magazine



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Business

LEICESTERSHIRE News

WORDS BY ELLIE BRAY AND DANNIELLA ITORMA



NICHE MAGAZINE JOINS GLOBAL BRAND IN MAJOR ASSET SALE

Leicester's own Niche Magazine has made headlines of its own, as it becomes part of the international Niche brand following a high-profile asset sale.

Founded by entrepreneur Jenny Cross, Niche has spent over a decade cementing its reputation as the go-to business magazine in the region - celebrating success stories, sparking conversations, and championing local enterprise. Now, with this landmark deal, Niche steps onto the global stage.

"This is more than just a sale - it's a statement," said Jenny Cross. "It shows the power of the Niche name and the value of the community we've built. Taking it global means our readers and advertisers will be part of something even bigger, with new opportunities, reach, and influence."

The move positions Niche Magazine alongside an international network of titles under the Niche brand umbrella, opening doors to cutting-edge business insight, collaboration across borders, and a louder voice for the stories that matter.

For the East Midlands, it's a moment of pride. A magazine born and bred locally, now part of a brand making waves worldwide.

Niche isn't just keeping pace with change - it's leading.

NEW IMMERSIVE GAMING EXPERIENCE SET TO OPEN LATER THIS YEAR IN HIGHCROSS

Activate was originally founded in 2017 in Canada and has since expanded internationally, bringing the first one to the Midlands later this year. They have social, dynamic games that are using interactive technology in real lifetime. The new gaming experience by Activate will be located directly within the lower mall of the Highcross near the much loved Tree Top Golf and Showcase Cinema de Lux.

Rich Beese co-founder of We Do Play told Insider Media: "Our goal with Activate is to create an unforgettable experience that combines physical movement with mental challenge and adrenaline-fuelled social interaction."

Highcross centre director also said to Insider Media: "We're really excited to be welcoming Activate to Highcross this year. We know that retail is much more than just shopping... and Activate is exactly the kind of innovative, experience-led offering that our visitors are looking for."

Activate is set to open later this year in Leicester having previously opening the first one in the UK last year in London, late 2024. The attraction combines physical ability with mental challenges along the way. It will test agility, memory and co-operation.

Go to playactivate.co.uk to book ahead of your trip and for more details, follow their Instagram at [@activategames.uk](https://www.instagram.com/activategames.uk).



MIDLANDS LAW FIRM APPOINTS NEWLY-QUALIFIED SOLICITORS



Shakespeare Martineau has welcomed the next generation of legal talent with the appointment of 12 newly-qualified solicitors – including nine in the Midlands – following the completion of their training contracts with the full-service law firm, representing a retention rate of 92%.

In Leicester, Gabriella Norton has qualified into the energy team and Victoria Hill now holds a permanent position in the real estate finance team.

In Birmingham, Isobel Hartley has secured a role with the litigation team, Mia Georgiou is strengthening the corporate team, Megan Walsh has been appointed to the private client team, Ellen Abrahall has taken up a role in the employment team, and Hanifah Nawaz and Kiera Wade have joined the real estate finance team.

Zenab Khatun, a valued colleague who had accepted a role in the real estate finance team in Birmingham, sadly passed away before being able to take up her position.

Victoria Tester, managing director at Shakespeare Martineau, said: “We are incredibly proud to have extended offers to all our qualifying trainees this year, resulting in a strong retention rate and a talented cohort of newly-qualified solicitors joining us.

“Each of them has shown dedication, adaptability and a real passion for delivering excellent client service during their training. It’s inspiring to see Gabriella, Victoria, Isobel, Mia, Megan, Ellen, Hanifah and Kiera take this next step in their careers with us, and I’m excited to watch them continue to grow and make their mark at Shakespeare

Martineau.

“While we celebrate these achievements, we also pause to remember our colleague, Zenab. Her loss is deeply felt across the firm, and our thoughts remain with her family, friends and all who knew her.”

Shakespeare Martineau offers multiple routes to qualification, including traditional training contracts, SQE graduate apprenticeships, self-funded SQE pathways and CILEX options. There is no minimum degree requirement for all routes – the firm assesses candidates based on their potential and suitability for the role, rather than solely on academic qualifications.

Go to shma.co.uk/careers/early-careers for further information about Shakespeare Martineau’s training contract programme.

FREE AI PROGRAMME; UNLOCKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

In partnership with BT Group, Small Business Britain researched and found a trend of eagerness to be at the forefront of AI adoption and innovation. 68% of small business owners believe AI could boost their growth, but they are often hindered by a lack of understanding of the new technology (60%).

Thankfully, their new AI programme will be available for small business owners to upskill workers through necessary digital and AI skills to thrive in a data driven world. AI is no longer exclusive for large corporate companies and therefore entrepreneurs across the UK will be able to sign up for the AI for Small Business programme.

Starting from 15 September 2025, there will be six modules in this six-week course with expert-led webinars and an interactive community. Small Business Britain still offers big opportunities and consultation. The founder of Small Business, Michelle Ovens CBE commented: “Small business owners know the massive opportunity AI poses, and with the right support, they can make the most of its potential.”

Michelle and her team of brilliant analysis made Small Business Britain the leading champion of the UK’s 5.5 million small businesses. She is also the director of Small Business Saturday UK, a national movement to spotlight the small business that make a big difference to the community and economy. They journey around visiting towns and cities across the UK to meet small businesses to share their story and offer free business support.

The course will cover AI fundamentals, optimising marketing



strategies with AI, AI safety and security and much more. It will finish with a four-week series of workshops in May training entrepreneurs into incorporating AI into their marketing strategies to drive sales and growth.

By embracing these free AI resources, small businesses can reduce operational costs by automating tasks and improving efficiency. Furthermore, it will enhance customer experience through personalised interactions and quick support. In the end, you will make smarter business decisions backed by data-driven insights.

For every small business everything is possible through innovation and growth. Start exploring today. You can sign up for their Small Business Programme and learn more about AI for Small Business here smallbusinessbritain.uk.

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“ Train people well enough so they can leave.
Treat them well enough so they don't want to. ”

-Richard Branson



East Midlands Chamber Newsroom

The Business Awards are back

The best businesses across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire are being invited to put themselves forward for the East Midlands Chamber Business Awards 2025/26.

The awards will take place early next year, with 12 categories recognising standout businesses in areas such as customer service, CSR leadership and people development.

Past winners include Kranlee Logistics, AtkinsRéalis, Longbow Venues, Murphy & Son, Howes Percival, West Nottinghamshire College and Browne Jacobson.

Finalists that make the shortlist will be revealed at the Chamber President's Celebration of Success on October 9, which marks the beginning of the judging process.

East Midlands radio hosts Jo and Sparky – who have a long established history of waking up listeners across the region – have been confirmed as hosts

at all three award ceremonies.

Sponsors confirmed so far include RandalSun Capital, Rolls-Royce, Amazon, emh Group, University of Derby, De Montfort University, Derby College Group, Howdens, Eversheds, Express Recruitment and ER Recruitment, with more to be announced shortly.

Chamber chief executive Scott Knowles said: "When achievement drives growth – and that could be anything from approach to people, sustainability, digital technology or developing future business talent through an apprenticeship – this should be recognised."

A spokesman for Derby County FC said: "Everyone at Derby County is really excited to be hosting The East Midlands Chamber Derbyshire Business Awards here at Pride Park Stadium.

"We look forward to welcoming all attending guests on the evening."

Book tickets via emc-dnl.co.uk/services/business-awards.



CEREMONY DATES & LOCATIONS

LEICESTERSHIRE February 26, 2026

Leicester City Football Club

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE March 12, 2026

Nottingham Belfry

DERBYSHIRE March 26, 2026

Derby County Football Club

EMC and NTU join forces

East Midlands Chamber has commenced a new strategic partnership with Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

Under the deal, the multi-award-winning university, with more than 36,000 enrolled students, will use its insight to help shape policy with the East Midlands business community, joining Chamber discussions with



leaders and decision-makers.

It will also be a partner of Generation Next – the Chamber network aimed at inspiring future leaders, entrepreneurs and young professionals aged 18-35.

NTU has supported students and graduates to create more than 500 new businesses since 2001, with more than 85% of them surviving for more than three years.

Chamber chief executive Scott Knowles said: "I look forward to furthering our longstanding collaboration with Nottingham Trent University and the benefit that strategic partnership will bring, whether at the table with policymakers, addressing shared challenges and opportunities for the region or in partnership with Generation Next – the Chamber's network for young professionals."

Professor Sarah Speight, NTU's deputy vice-chancellor and provost, said: "At Nottingham Trent University, we believe that strong collaboration with business isn't just important – it's essential."

One of the most inspiring women in the world

to speak at our Celebration of Success



▲ DR JO SALTER MBE

Britain's first female jet fighter pilot – who went on to be voted one of the BBC's 50 most inspiring women in the world – will share her stories as guest speaker at the East Midlands Chamber president's 2025 Celebration of Success this autumn.

Dr Jo Salter MBE was rejected twice by the RAF, when women weren't allowed to fly, before going on to change the test policies for new recruits in the air force.

She went on to help create a stronger and more modern RAF as the first female leader of an all-male squadron – and was even cited by Tom Cruise as one of his inspirations for *Top Gun: Maverick*.

The celebration takes place at

The Renaissance at Kelham Hall in Nottinghamshire on Thursday, October 9, and will be an opportunity for businesses to network with drinks and reflect on their successes so far in 2025.

Chamber president Dawn Whitmore said: "It's an opportunity to share with members our work and achievements over the previous months – and plans for the coming months – along with a chance for the region's business leaders to get together and network.

"Above all that, it's a chance for us all to celebrate the region as a whole and the Chamber's vital role within it."

For details visit the events page on the East Midlands Chamber website at emc-dnl.co.uk.

Future Leaders Awards recognises 'promising students'

Some of the University of Derby's most promising students have been recognised through the East Midlands Chamber's 2025 Future Leaders Awards.

The awards celebrate students who have gone above and beyond in their academic studies and in showing outstanding potential for their future career paths.

This is the third year that the Chamber has supported the awards, with each student invited to meet one of the Chamber's senior management team to find out how it can support

them in their career aspirations.

Chamber director of resources Lucy Robinson said: "We're recognising the students who have gone above and beyond; and as a reward for their achievements, the Chamber offers them support including free access to the Generation Next network, invitations to our conferences and the chance to network with potential employers."

The winning students were Kiera Harber, Tobias Cartner, Sanjay Lakhani, Katie Dutton, Sarah Timms, Derby twins Sam and Alex Bolton, and Aimee Barnes.

LUCY ROBINSON ▶





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THE DISPATCH

YOUR INSIDE TRACK ON LEICESTER'S LOGISTICS AND MANUFACTURING MOVES



PANATTONI AGREES STRATEGIC ACQUISITION OF NEW MILTON KEYNES SITE

Panattoni, the largest industrial real estate developer in Europe, has strengthened its commitment to Milton Keynes with an agreement to acquire a prime five-acre site, marking the next phase of its strategic expansion in the region. The new development, Panattoni Milton Keynes 100, will be a single-unit of 100,000 sq ft and bring additional high-quality, speculative industrial space to the market.

A detailed planning application will be submitted in Q2 2025, with Panattoni's £30 million commitment into the project to further enhance its logistics hubs in Milton Keynes. The site, acquired from owner-occupier Tesa UK Ltd, will be redeveloped following the demolition of the existing industrial unit.

James Watson, Head of

Development, Southern England & London at Panattoni commented: "Our latest acquisition underlines our long-term commitment to Milton Keynes and our confidence in the region's industrial and logistics market. With the completion of the new logistics hub, Panattoni Park Milton Keynes, we wanted to continue to expand our speculative offering, giving tenants flexible size options for businesses to move and grow in the region.

"Panattoni is offering clients modern, high-quality, sustainable space in a prime location. This investment aligns with our strategy to deliver best-in-class facilities to meet occupier demand. We look forward to bringing forward the planning and working with the community even further.

"This latest prime UK acquisition provides tenants with easy

access across the country. The site complements the ongoing development at Panattoni Park Milton Keynes less than one mile away, where we are delivering two large-scale units to the Southern M1 market."

Already underway and committed, Panattoni Park Milton Keynes comprises of two speculative units; 343,666 sq ft which is now complete and ready for tenant fit-out, while a 448,366 sq ft unit is scheduled for completion in May 2025. Both units will achieve a BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating and net zero carbon in construction, reflecting Panattoni's focus on sustainability. Featuring 18m clear internal height, 55m service yards, and extensive loading capabilities, these buildings offer future occupiers best-in-class facilities in a prime logistics location near Junction 14 of the M1.

AMAZON SET TO OPEN NORTHAMPTON FULFILMENT CENTRE, CREATING MORE JOBS IN THE EAST MIDLANDS



Amazon is building four new fulfilment centres and new delivery stations nationwide, creating thousands of new jobs in the UK.

A new state-of-the-art fulfilment centre is set to open in Hull later this year, creating more than 2,000 jobs, with recruitment expected to go live on Friday July 11. Amazon will also launch another fulfilment centre in Northampton in 2026, followed by two more in the East Midlands. A number of new delivery stations will also be opened across the country in the next three years.

The fulfilment centre in Hull will sit next to an 88,000 square foot delivery

station from where Amazon dispatches customer orders.

Amazon pays full-time employees a minimum of £28,000 per year (£30,000 in London), and will create over 60 different roles at the new sites, including positions for robotics technicians, safety experts and mechatronic engineers.

The news comes as part of Amazon’s announced plan to invest £40 billion in the UK over the next three years (2025-2027). The investment will create thousands of new permanent, full-time jobs in the UK, with the vast majority outside of London and the South East.

Additionally, the company will

open two new office buildings near its current London HQ in the Borough of Hackney.

It is estimated the overall investment will contribute an additional £38 billion to the UK’s total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), demonstrating Amazon’s continued commitment to supporting growth and productivity for the benefit of its customers, partners and the wider economy.

As a top 10 private sector employer, Amazon already employs over 75,000 people in the UK, providing roles of all kinds, at all levels, across every region of the country.

FUNDING SECURED FOR LOCAL CLOTHING MANUFACTURER

Leicestershire-based fashion brand REFLEKT Clothing has secured more than £14,000 in funding through the British Business Bank’s Start Up Loans programme, delivered by First Enterprise.

Founded by Daniel Williams, REFLEKT champions a sustainable approach to clothing production, with every garment designed and made in the UK. The brand prioritises environmentally responsible practices, including small-batch manufacturing, the use of low-impact dyes, OCS-certified organic cotton, and biodegradable packaging.

Petra Eddison, business advisor at First Enterprise, told East Midlands Business Link: “Daniel’s passion for sustainability and commitment to high-quality menswear is truly inspiring. Supporting him with the Start Up Loan application was a real privilege, and I’m excited to watch REFLEKT continue to go from strength to strength.”

The investment will support REFLEKT’s next stage of growth, enabling the team to boost brand visibility through advertising, enhance the company’s website and expand its menswear line to meet soaring demand. Over the past year alone, sales have more than doubled.

▶ DANIEL WILLIAMS





TILLEY'S TAKE

Sue Tilley's manufacturing update

WHY LEICESTERSHIRE'S LOGISTICS ENGINE IS CENTRAL TO THE UK'S GROWTH STRATEGY

The UK's industrial strategy is evolving. Less of a single glossy document, more a web of strategic missions, place-based opportunities and sectoral ambitions, and if you read between the lines, one thing is clear – logistics is no longer a back-office function. It's a national priority. And Leicestershire is right at the heart of it.

Our region combines world-class connectivity with a deepening pool of innovation. East Midlands Airport (EMA) is already the UK's largest dedicated air cargo hub. The Freeport status surrounding it is unlocking investment. And global partnerships – like Loughborough University's pioneering work with MIT on resilient, sustainable supply chains – are helping to shape not just how goods move, but how entire economies function.

Golden Triangle, green future

Strategically located within the Midlands' Golden Triangle of logistics (an area with a high number of logistics and warehousing facilities), Leicestershire offers unrivalled access to national and international markets.

Around 90% of the UK population is within a four-hour drive of EMA, which moves over 400,000 tonnes of cargo a year.

But the story isn't just about speed. It's about the future of movement – faster, greener and smarter. That's where the region shines. With Space Park Leicester exploring the use of satellite data to optimise global supply routes, and DMU focusing on digital systems and AI-led logistics, Leicestershire is leading the shift from manual movement to intelligent infrastructure.

Freeport advantage

EMA's Freeport designation, alongside linked sites at East Midlands Intermodal Park and Ratcliffe-on-Soar, creates a powerful cluster for trade, technology and transformation. With tax incentives and simplified customs processes, it's already attracting businesses in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and smart logistics.

The result is a fertile platform for business growth and high-quality jobs – right here in North West Leicestershire.

Global thinking, local action

Nowhere is the shift from local strength to global leadership more evident than at Loughborough University, where Professor Jan Godsell and her team are working with the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology (MIT) to tackle some of the world's biggest supply chain challenges.

Together, they are rethinking how businesses respond to disruption, reduce emissions, and build resilient systems that serve both economies and communities. This partnership puts Leicestershire on the global map of supply chain innovation and builds a bridge between world-leading research and real-world deployment.

A regional engine for national growth

The emerging industrial strategy has logistics at its core, not just as a sector, but as a system of systems: connecting digital tech, energy, advanced manufacturing and global trade.

Here in the East Midlands, we're not just a transport corridor. We're a testbed for smart supply chains, a platform for clean growth and a gateway for international business.

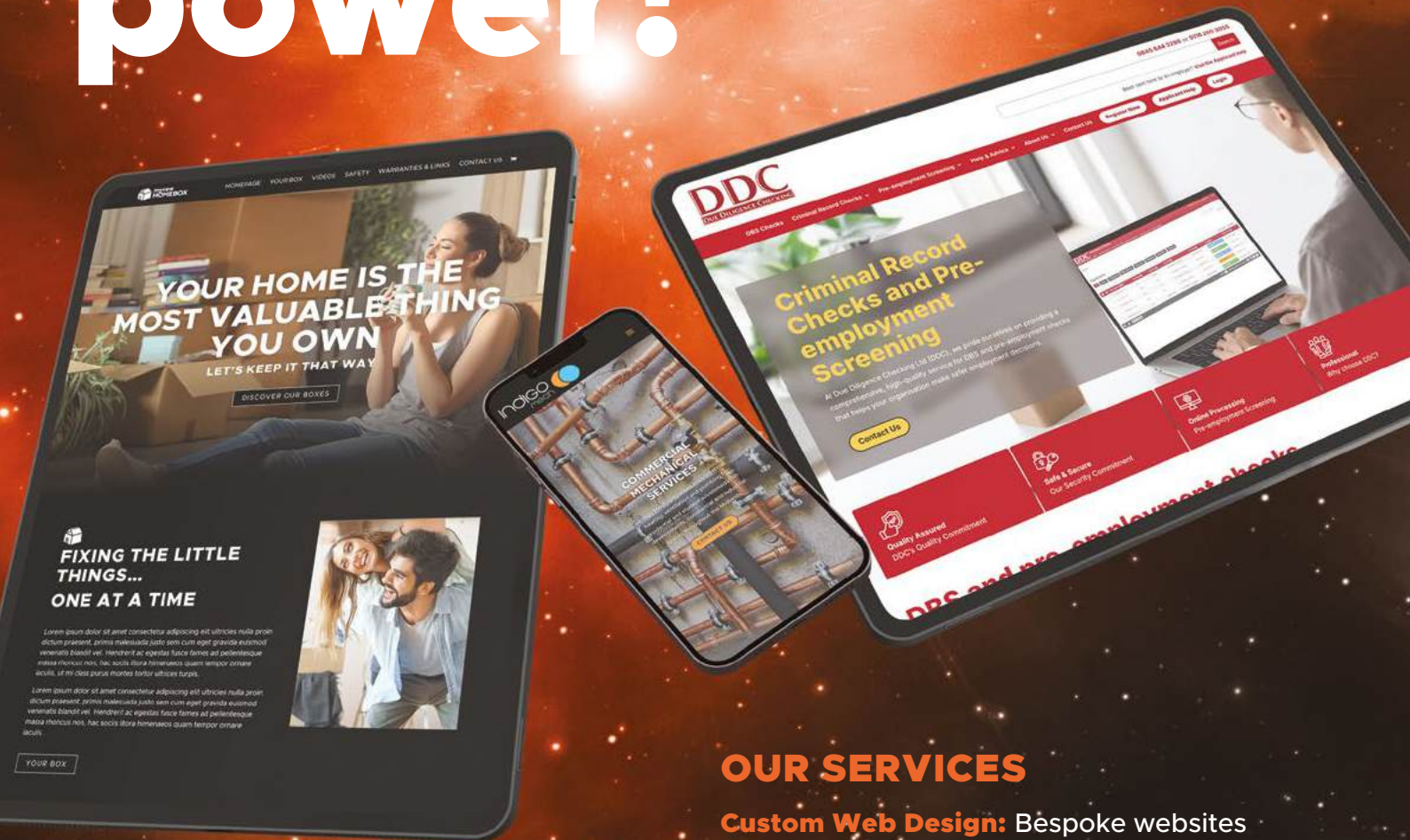
In short: Leicestershire isn't just in the middle of the country. It's at the centre of the UK's economic future.



ABOUT SUE

From founding 'Classy Rags' to driving regional economic development in Leicester and Leicestershire, Sue's journey has been fuelled by a passion for innovation, manufacturing, collaboration and sustainable growth. Sue recently won the Outstanding Senior Female Executive award and was named Overall Winner Inspirational Female Leader in the 2024 East Midlands Women's Awards. Find more at suetilleyassociates.co.uk.

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NOVEMBER

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

NOVEMBER ISN'T JUST ABOUT MOUSTACHES. BEHIND THE MOVEMBER CAMPAIGNS AND CHARITY CHALLENGES LIES A SERIOUS MESSAGE: MEN ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO TALK ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH, AND THE COST OF SILENCE CAN BE DEVASTATING WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

When November rolls around each year, it's hard to miss the moustaches. From patchy first attempts to full, proud beards, facial hair becomes a talking point. But beyond the fun of Movember is a stark reality. Men's mental health month serves as a reminder that too many men in the UK are struggling in silence - and in some

cases, losing their lives because they feel unable to speak up.

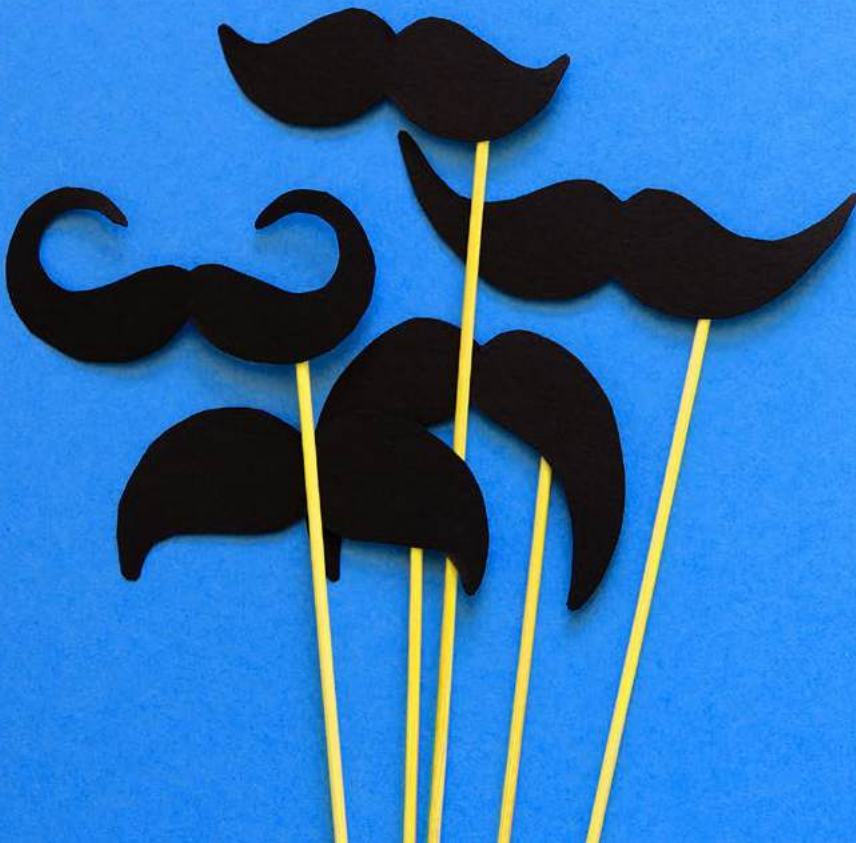
The statistics are sobering. According to the Office for National Statistics, three out of four suicides in the UK are by men. Suicide remains the leading cause of death for men under 50. Despite increasing awareness campaigns, many men still find it difficult to reach out for help. Social expectations around masculinity, fear of stigma and a lack of appropriate services all contribute to the problem.

THE SILENT CRISIS

The phrase 'man up' has long lingered in British culture, carrying an implicit message that men must be stoic, tough and unemotional. While attitudes are slowly shifting, these outdated expectations still affect how men approach their mental health. Research from Mind shows that while men are just as likely as women to experience common mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, they are far less likely to seek support.

A survey by the Priory Group revealed that 40% of men have never spoken to anyone about their mental health. When asked why, the most common responses included embarrassment, a belief that they should be able to cope alone and fear of being judged. For many, bottling things up feels safer than opening up.

But the cost of silence can be



“ CHECKING IN WITH THE MEN IN YOUR LIFE – WHETHER IT’S A MATE, A BROTHER, OR A COLLEAGUE – CAN BE POWERFUL ”

deadly. Every week in the UK, around 84 men die by suicide. Behind each number is a father, brother, partner or friend – and families left grappling with the heartbreak of lives cut short.

So, what can be done on a personal level? If you're struggling, or you know someone who is, there are steps that can make a difference:

- Talk to someone you trust. This might be a friend, partner or family member. Starting with a simple “I'm not feeling myself lately” can open the door.
- See your GP. Doctors can provide support, refer you to talking therapies or explore other treatments.
- Get active. Exercise, even something as small as a daily walk, can improve mood and reduce stress.
- Limit alcohol. While it might seem like a way to cope, alcohol often makes anxiety and depression worse.
- Reach out for professional help. Charities like Mind, CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably), and Samaritans offer confidential support, often 24/7.

Friends and family also play a crucial role. Checking in with the men in your life – whether it's a mate, a brother or a colleague – can be powerful. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture. Sometimes, a quiet pint, a text saying ‘How are you really?’ or a walk together is enough to let someone know you're there.

Experts stress that listening without judgement is key. Avoid rushing to fix the problem or offering clichés. Instead, give space, show empathy and reassure them that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Conversations about men's mental health are becoming more common, thanks to high-profile figures such as Prince William, Tyson Fury and Rio Ferdinand sharing their struggles. Seeing men in the public eye being

vulnerable challenges outdated stereotypes and opens the way for others to follow.

But there's still a long road ahead. Campaigners argue that systemic change – from workplace policies to NHS funding – is just as vital as grassroots awareness. Men's mental health month is a rallying cry, reminding us all that silence costs lives.

As November's moustaches sprout across the country, the hope is that each one sparks a conversation. Because if men feel safe to talk, to seek help and to admit when they're struggling, fewer families will have to face the pain of losing someone too soon.



MOVEMBER GROWING AWARENESS FOR MEN'S HEALTH

Each November, moustaches take centre stage across the UK and beyond. But behind the growing facial hair lies a serious mission: Movember, the global campaign dedicated to improving men's health, particularly mental health, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

Movember began in 2003 in Australia as a small idea between friends and has since grown into a worldwide movement. Its focus is clear: start conversations, raise funds and ultimately save lives. By encouraging men to grow moustaches, the campaign creates a visible symbol that sparks discussions about health issues men often find difficult to talk about.

The impact of Movember goes far beyond facial hair. Since its inception, the charity has funded more than 1,300 men's health projects worldwide. In the UK, this has included research into mental health programmes tailored for men, early detection of prostate and testicular cancers and community initiatives that provide vital support for men struggling in silence.

Mental health is a key focus. Movember works to prevent men from reaching crisis points, offering practical guidance, funding community-based support and promoting early intervention. Their approach recognises that men often experience mental health differently and need services designed with these differences in mind.

The campaign also has a broader cultural impact. By putting men's health in the spotlight and normalising conversations about emotions and wellbeing, Movember is helping to challenge long-standing stigmas around masculinity and mental health.

For many men, growing a moustache is more than a bit of fun – it's a conversation starter, a signal of solidarity and, crucially, a step towards better health. Movember reminds us that talking about health is a sign of strength, not weakness.



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Why life cover is a vital part of any employee package

IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE, FINANCIAL SECURITY IS FRONT OF MIND FOR MANY EMPLOYEES. THE ASSURANCE THAT THEIR LOVED ONES WOULD BE PROTECTED IF THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENED IS MORE THAN JUST A NICE-TO-HAVE – IT'S A CORE CONCERN. GARETH CARROLL, DIRECTOR AT BESPOKE BENEFITS, EXPLAINS MORE [WORDS BY EMILY MILLER](#)

employers, making it easier to attract skilled professionals and retain top talent. Moreover, employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, contributing to lower turnover and a stronger workplace culture.

Life cover can also be a cost-effective benefit. "Policies provided through an employer can offer tax advantages compared to individual arrangements, making it accessible and attractive for staff while allowing organisations to deliver meaningful support at relatively low cost," Gareth adds.

Beyond financial considerations, life cover plays an important role during difficult times. The sudden loss of a colleague is never easy, but the assurance that their family has financial support can alleviate one burden during an emotional period, reflecting a company's compassion and responsibility.

Finally, life cover complements other benefits such as private healthcare, critical illness cover and pensions, contributing to a comprehensive approach to employee wellbeing. "A truly effective benefits package considers physical, mental, and financial health, and life cover forms an essential piece of this puzzle."

"Introducing or enhancing life cover demonstrates commitment to your team's future while positioning your organisation as a caring and progressive employer. Investing in life cover is more than a policy decision – it's an investment in the wellbeing, loyalty and peace of mind of the people who make your business thrive."

Business owners like to save tax when they come to sell, but as a recent tribunal case has highlighted, it's not always straightforward proving to HMRC that this isn't one of the main reasons that you're selling.

Life cover is often seen as a simple insurance product, but its impact goes far beyond numbers on a policy. For employees, it offers peace of mind that their family would be financially supported in the event of their death. This reassurance can reduce stress and allow them to focus more fully on their work, safe in the knowledge that their loved ones are protected. For employers, this makes life cover a powerful tool, not only for supporting staff but also for strengthening the business itself.

Gareth Carroll, Director at Bespoke Benefits, says: "From a business perspective, offering life cover signals that an organisation genuinely cares about its people. In a competitive job market, benefits packages are often a key differentiator." Companies that provide life cover stand out as caring



“ IN A COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET, BENEFITS PACKAGES ARE OFTEN A KEY DIFFERENTIATOR ”



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Johnson Astills' family team expands as it marks 30 years



CELEBRATING ITS 30TH YEAR IN BUSINESS, THE FIRM CREATES THREE NEW ROLES DESPITE A CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CLIMATE

“ I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE FIRM'S REPUTATION IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE VOLUME OF NEW WORK

Leicester and Loughborough-based law firm Johnson Astills, which operates across two offices and employs 45 staff, has welcomed three new employees and continues with its family law team recruitment programme.

Solicitor Shannan Hardwick joined the family department this July. Joining from a Nottingham practice, she brings four years' experience in divorce, finance, children matters and domestic abuse cases. In September, senior solicitor Steven Illidge joined from LDJ Solicitors' Hinckley branch, bringing over 30 years of experience with him. He specialises in the financial and property aspects of marriage and relationship breakdown, including high net worth cases. A third new employee was also recruited as a paralegal, following completion of the Legal Practice Course and her Master's Degree. It is also hoped that another new paralegal will shortly be joining the family team straight from university.

Director and family solicitor at Johnson Astills, Sharon Percival – who was this year ranked in the top

10 solicitors in Leicestershire, based on ReviewSolicitors' client feedback – said: "It's a really exciting time for us to be expanding the team, especially when in other industries, people are making cutbacks. Incoming new work is buoyant, and we're incredibly fortunate. I strongly believe that the firm's reputation is the driving force behind the volume of new work we are getting and is also a strong factor in our successful recruitment appointments."

The current family senior solicitors bring a combined 99 years of post-qualification experience, with Sharon, Emma Mitchell (director), Victoria Chamberlain (associate solicitor) and Steven Illidge (senior solicitor).

The team have a wealth of experience covering all aspects of family law and relationship breakdowns, including divorce, separation and resolution of financial matters arising therefrom. Emma, Victoria and Steven are highly skilled in dealing with the resolution of complex and high-value financial disputes.

Bethany Gray (solicitor), who joined the firm as a paralegal and qualified two years ago, has already gained vast experience in dealing with complicated domestic abuse and children cases, including those with international elements. The firm's Domestic Violence and Abuse Department runs monthly pro bono clinics for service users of Living Without Abuse, a local domestic abuse charity.

Emma commented: "I am very grateful to be part of such a talented and hardworking team. The dedication and passion they bring to their work is truly inspiring and their commitment to excellence is a source of great pride to me."

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Dispelling the Myths: Common misconceptions about Resolution Together



EMMA DAVIES ▲

THE RESOLUTION TOGETHER APPROACH ALLOWS ONE SOLICITOR TO WORK WITH BOTH PARTIES IN A FAMILY LAW DISPUTE, AIMING TO RESOLVE ISSUES AMICABLY AND EFFICIENTLY. NELSONS' **EMMA DAVIES** DISPELS SOME COMMON MYTHS ABOUT THIS MODEL AND EXPLAINS HOW IT WORKS

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Misconception 1: One solicitor cannot be impartial

Clarification: One of the most prevalent misconceptions is that a single solicitor cannot provide impartial advice to both parties. However, Resolution Together is designed to ensure fairness and balance. The solicitor is specially trained to navigate the complexities of acting impartially as a neutral facilitator while safeguarding each client's interests. The process includes individual meetings with each party to understand their circumstances and priorities, followed by joint sessions where legal advice is provided to help both parties make informed decisions.

Misconception 2: Resolution Together is suitable for all couples

Clarification: Resolution Together is not suitable for every couple. It is specifically designed for those who are willing and able to cooperate and work together towards a fair outcome. Factors such as trust, willingness to collaborate and the absence of coercive control or abuse are crucial for the model to be effective. Couples who meet these criteria can benefit from a streamlined and less adversarial process.

Misconception 3: It only addresses financial disputes

Clarification: While Resolution Together is highly effective in resolving financial disputes, it is also suitable for addressing a wide range of family law issues, including child arrangements and property division. The solicitor provides comprehensive legal advice on all aspects of separation, ensuring that both parties have the information they need to reach mutually beneficial agreements.

Misconception 4: It is more expensive than traditional methods

Clarification: Another common misconception is that using one solicitor

for both parties is more expensive. In reality, Resolution Together can be more cost-effective than traditional methods, where each party hires their own solicitor. By sharing one lawyer, couples can significantly reduce legal fees and associated costs, making the process more affordable.

Misconception 5: Confidentiality is compromised

Clarification: Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the Resolution Together model. The process is private, ensuring that sensitive information remains confidential. This is particularly important for high-net-worth individuals who may have complex financial arrangements and assets. By keeping disputes out of court, Resolution Together protects privacy and minimises the risk of unwanted publicity.

Misconception 6: It is a new and unproven method

Clarification: While Resolution Together is relatively new, it is built on established principles of collaborative law and mediation. The model has been developed by Resolution, a national organisation of family law professionals, and is supported by extensive training and guidance. It represents a transformative approach to family law, offering a viable alternative to traditional adversarial methods.

Resolution Together offers a unique and effective way to navigate separation and divorce, particularly for high-net-worth individuals. By addressing common misconceptions, we hope to provide clarity and encourage more couples to consider this innovative model. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to get in touch. Together, we can find the best path forward.



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When company profits are healthy, many business owners choose to buy an investment property through their limited company rather than personally, because it avoids having to extract the cash first which would incur additional tax liabilities.

But what if you want to sell your company but keep the properties? What are the tax implications if you decide to divide up a business which comes with properties?

Reconstructing companies with investment properties

IT'S ESSENTIAL TO TAKE PROFESSIONAL TAXATION ADVICE BEFORE YOU RESTRUCTURE SAYS **NICK WRIGHT**, HEAD OF CORPORATE TAX AT JERROMS MILLER SPECIALIST TAX. HERE, HE EXPLAINS WHY AND LOOKS INTO THE OPTIONS OPEN TO OWNER-MANAGED BUSINESSES

Incorporating your property portfolio into your trading company can be seen as a good move, as it removes the financial and cost restrictions of owning property personally. It also means you avoid income tax charges when extracting cash from the company for the sole purpose of investing in a property.

But, what if at some stage you no longer want to work with your business partner and decide to divide up your company? Or what if a buyer is interested in your trading business but not the investment properties? What happens to the property element within the business then?

Owning investment properties through a limited company isn't always tax efficient, especially when mixed with trading businesses, because when the owners come to sell, they may not qualify for tax relief such as Business Asset Disposal Relief.

You could look at deconstructing your business by putting the components into different groups, but there are so many tax implications – the main ones being capital gains tax and corporation tax. VAT too is quite fundamental when leasing a property, so you have to make sure that you don't inadvertently trigger it.

How it works

Let's take, for example, a family-run business looking to sell for £5m but with investment properties worth £4m. The buyer has no wish to acquire the properties, so a demerger is needed before sale. In this instance, the properties can be transferred into a separate group held by the same shareholders in the same proportions,

“ OWNING INVESTMENT PROPERTIES THROUGH A LIMITED COMPANY ISN'T ALWAYS TAX EFFICIENT ”

allowing the trading company to be sold unencumbered.

There are several ways of restructuring businesses, but we usually advise going straight into a capital reduction demerger which allows you to separate the companies within a group with no tax charges at all. Whatever you decide to do, though, you must be able to show HMRC that it's for commercial reasons and not to avoid paying tax. Your tax adviser will write to HMRC first to get clearance.

Reconstructing companies with property can be complicated and, in our experience, when things go wrong they go catastrophically wrong. Without seeking professional taxation advice first, you could be exposed to many tax charges and solicitors' fees, leaving you with a situation that's expensive and not always fixable.

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WORDS BY DANNIELLA ITORMA

Michelle Ovens CBE, the director of Small Business Saturday UK, has been leading the movement since the launch in 2013. Each year, in the lead-up to Small Business Saturday UK, Michelle and the team spotlight 100 small businesses for 100 days across the country. Each day gives them national recognition to seriously boost their visibility.

It doesn't stop there. For the Small Business Saturday Tour, the team will journey around visiting towns and cities across the UK to meet small businesses to share their story and offer free business support.

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If you're chosen to be one of their Small Biz 100, you'll be featured across their social media and PR campaigns, joining exclusive events such as reception in Downing Street, getting your name in front of thousands of customers, supporters and press. Finally, you'll become part of the community of inspiring entrepreneurs.

Why should you support Small Business Saturday UK?

Forget about big-time companies and giants for a day, this is about celebrating independent businesses that make our towns more vibrant and

lively. Think about it: a cosy café shop that has the best vibes for a perfect gathering, or a little bookshop that has its resident cat lying around. These places are the heart of the community.

Don't be afraid to try something new; small businesses are there for you, handcrafting unique sourced items. You'll see something that truly catches your eye, a change of scenery from your everyday routine.

Small businesses are passionate about what they do, and they often provide a high level of personal attention and expertise.

How can you support your local businesses and Small Business Saturday UK?

The first choice is to visit your local shop, café, bookshops, services and more. Explore the ones you haven't been to before – or if you're into experiencing new things, this is a perfect time for you. It's an easy and interactive way to make your local businesses better in the future!



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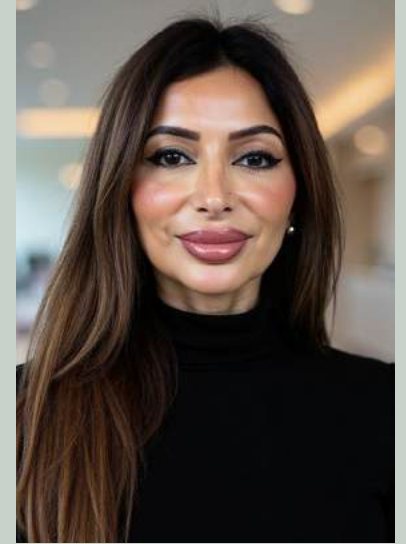
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Leicestershire's top 50 small businesses

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Coffee with a Champion: Tania Gerard

NICHE SAT DOWN WITH DOUBLE FINALIST TANIA GERARD (NICHE BUSINESS AWARDS RISING STAR AND COMMUNITY CHAMPION) TO TALK NEURODIVERSITY, ACCESSIBLE MARKETING AND WHY MOST BUSINESSES ARE UNINTENTIONALLY EXCLUDING THE PEOPLE THEY NEED TO REACH

Tania, let's get to the point—why does accessible marketing matter now?

Because exclusion is costing businesses in the UK customers, talent, reputation and most importantly, money. One in five people is neurodivergent. One in four has a disability. So, if your marketing, website, recruitment or internal culture isn't accessible, you're closing the door on millions and most don't even realise this.

Accessible marketing isn't just about compliance, it is so much more than that. I help companies shift from well-meaning to well-designed, to help them create that user journey that works for everyone.

What kind of results do your clients actually see?

A manufacturing firm restructured their hiring with accessibility in mind

and quality hires jumped 40%. Another client, a lovely e-commerce brand, updated their website to meet WCAG guidelines with our recommendations and their conversion rate rose by 21%.

Inclusive design benefits absolutely everyone. And when you build for everyone in mind, everyone gets the chance to invest in your business.

What pushed you to start this work?

I'm autistic. I have ADHD. I spent years navigating systems that made it harder than it needed to be to be honest with you. I realised I just can't be alone in this so Tania Gerard Digital was born, to help everyone.

What kind of companies should be talking to you right now?

If you care about talent, reputation, growing your revenue and/or doing the

right thing, we should talk. I work with brands across healthcare, education, tech, e-commerce and the public sector. Whether you're leading a team, building a product or reviewing your digital presence, accessibility touches all of it, and the legal risk of ignoring it is growing by the day.

What's next for Tania Gerard Digital?

We're scaling across the UK and US. More leaders are waking up, but many don't know where to start. That's where I come in. Practical, tailored training. WCAG audits. Inclusive strategy. Internal culture change. This is my area and I would love to chat to your readers about their business.

If you want to find out more about Tania's work, please check out her website: taniagerard.co.uk



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“They have been there for me and my family as we have navigated our way through anxiety and OCD, accessed help following diagnoses of neurodivergence. We now have a much better understanding of how this impacts us. All too often people make judgments about you without any idea of how hard you are trying to fit in with society's view of “normal”. Having Leicester Psychology Clinic there throughout this has made life more bearable.”



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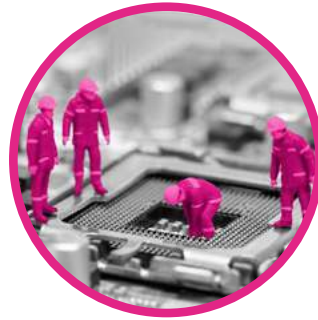
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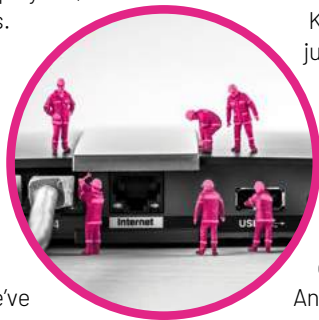
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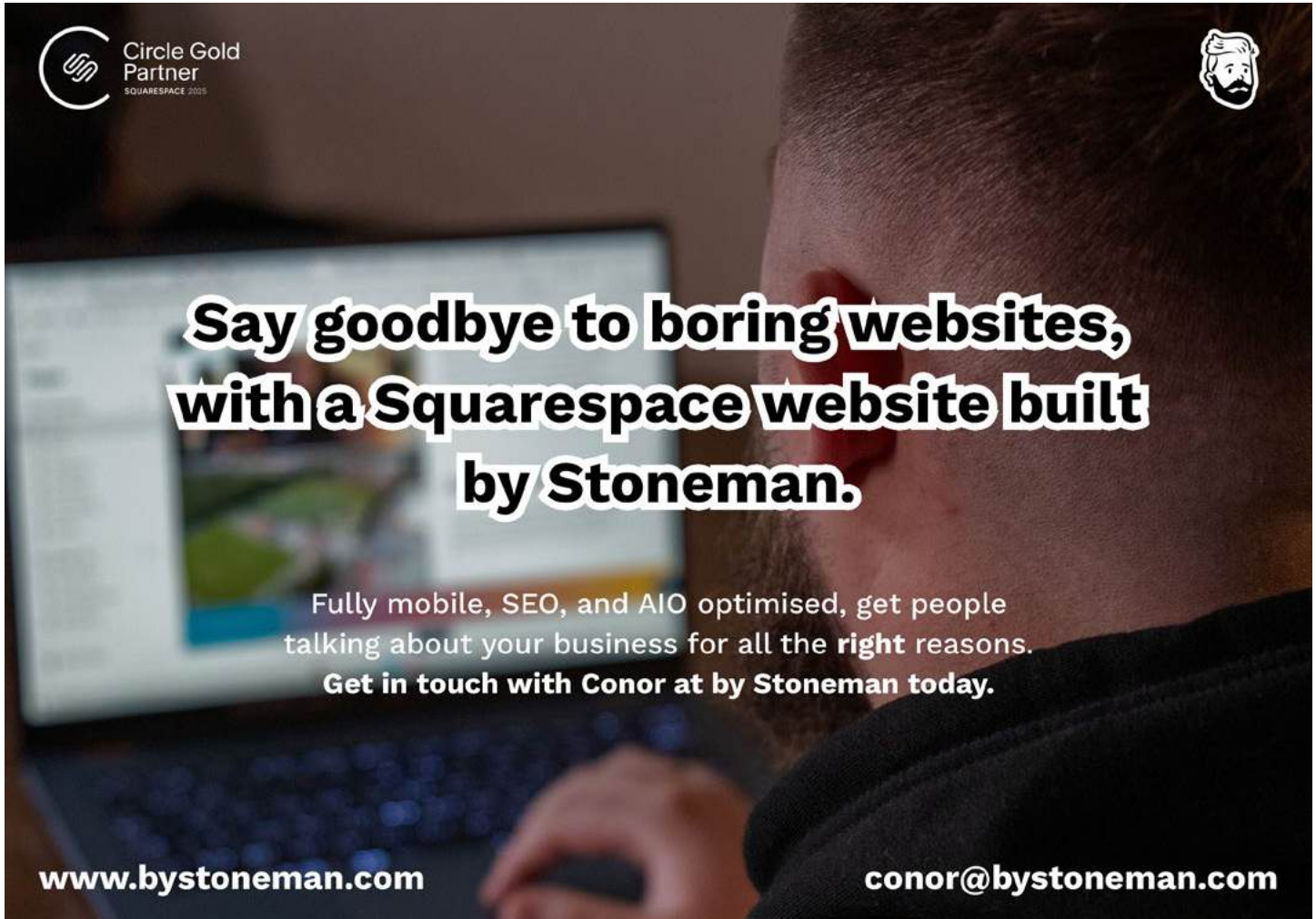


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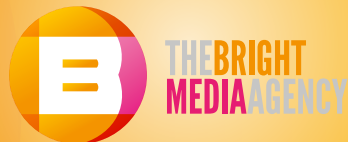
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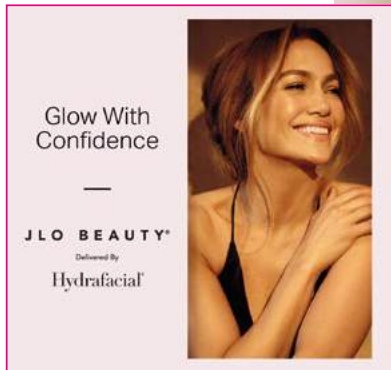
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Hershey Champaneri, who opened the doors to aumspas over 10 years ago, has always held a vision to blend advanced treatments with a truly personal service. Over the past year, she has seen HydraFacials become one of her most sought-after offerings.

"The beauty of HydraFacial," Hershey explains, "is that it's suitable for everyone – whether you're dealing with congestion, dryness, fine lines, or just want that brighter glow. My clients love that they can see the difference after just one treatment."

The HydraFacial, popular with ever-youthful stars like Jennifer Lopez, and doctors like Dr Nassif of Dr NassifMD and Dr Denise Gross, uses patented vortex-fusion technology to cleanse, exfoliate, extract impurities and infuse the skin with tailored serums. Treatments typically take around 45 minutes, making them an achievable commitment for busy professionals. But what sets it apart is the way it can

be personalised.

Hershey has guided many of her clients through ongoing courses that target specific concerns. Brightening packages for dull or uneven skin tone have been popular, while others opt for anti-ageing treatments enhanced with red-light therapy. "The LED element really takes results further," she notes. "Red light stimulates collagen, reduces inflammation, and helps skin feel firmer over time. Clients often say it's the first time they've found a treatment that works beyond the surface."

One of the benefits Hershey emphasises most is consistency. Regular sessions every four to six weeks build cumulative results. "It's not about a quick fix. The HydraFacial is a skin health programme. Clients notice not only the immediate glow, but that their skin texture improves, pores look clearer, and fine lines soften as the months go on."

For many, the appeal is that HydraFacials are medical-grade but

non-invasive. There's no downtime; clients can leave aumspas and head straight back to work or social plans. That practicality, coupled with visible results, is making it the facial to have.

And while HydraFacials are often thought of as a high-end luxury, aumspas has worked hard to make them affordable and accessible. With options for single treatments as well as discounted courses, Hershey believes in giving her clients choice without compromise.

"Skin health shouldn't be exclusive. We want people to feel that this is a realistic part of their self-care, not just a once-in-a-blue-moon treat.

"I always say that your skin is as individual as you are," Hershey reflects. "No two HydraFacials here are the same. The joy for me is watching someone's confidence grow as their skin changes – seeing them smile at their reflection and feel good in their own skin. That's why I do this. To book a HydraFacial, go to aumspas.co.uk.

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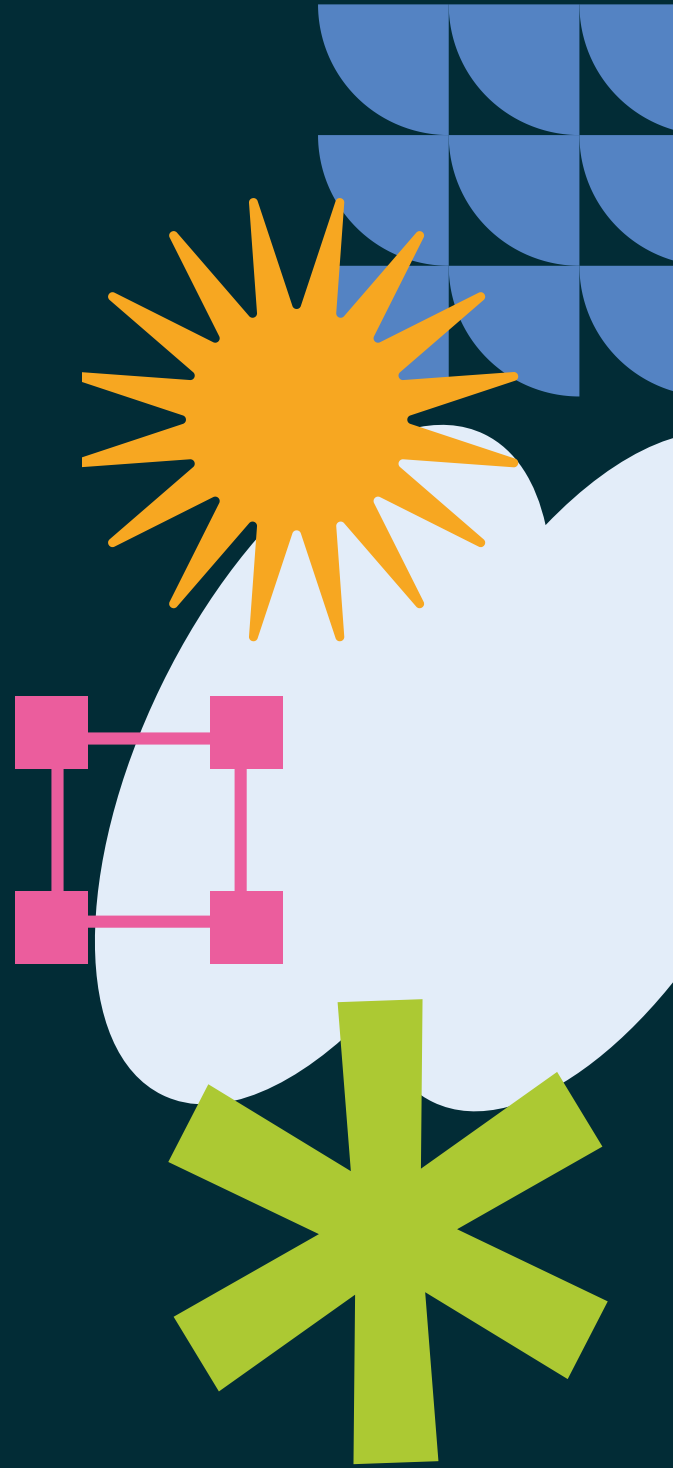
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DIVERSE LOCAL TALENT SHINES

LEICESTER'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY CELEBRATED IN BOLLYWOOD STYLE AT ATHENA CEREMONY WORDS BY ELLIE BRAY

This year's Niche Business Awards, with its Bollywood theme, awarded 16 well-deserved winners as they took to the stage at the iconic Athena venue in Leicester's Cultural Quarter.

Chosen by a panel of independent judges, the winners celebrated alongside finalists, sponsors, ambassadors, judges and over 400 guests, with the evening headline sponsored by digital agency Trident.

Adam Burrage, Managing Director of Trident, said: "Being a Niche Business Award winner is a significant recognition of excellence. It signifies dedication, innovation and a positive impact within the Leicestershire business landscape. It's a testament to hard work and a mark of quality.

"We believe in supporting local growth, and the Niche Business Awards truly champion that. It's inspiring to see businesses thrive, and we're proud to be part of an event that shines a spotlight on their achievements."

Organised by Cross Productions, the producer of Niche Magazine, the awards were established to proudly celebrate the business excellence and achievements across Leicestershire. This year's ceremony - the eleventh of its kind - highlighted individuals and businesses that have made positive impacts to their community.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

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Rebecca Holders Holders Estate Agents

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Nitesh Somani Kara Healthcare

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Chris Shaw Think Funding



Abacus Flooring Honoured with King's Award



LEICESTER-BASED ABACUS FLOORING SOLUTIONS HAS RECEIVED THE PRESTIGIOUS KING'S AWARD FOR ENTERPRISE, A RECOGNITION THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE COMPANY'S OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE
WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

The King's Award, one of the highest accolades for UK businesses, is awarded to companies demonstrating remarkable achievements and sustainable impact.

For Abacus Flooring Solutions, it marks not only a celebration of their craftsmanship and customer service but also their dedication to raising standards across the industry.

Founded locally and grown with strong Midlands roots, they have built their reputation on quality, reliability and a forward-thinking approach to design and installation. This award shines a national spotlight on the team's commitment to pushing boundaries, from embracing new technologies to fostering long-term relationships with clients and partners.

Nick Megson, Founder and Managing Director of Abacus Flooring Solutions, said: "We're over the moon to

receive a King's Award for Innovation. Abaplas came from a real passion to do things better - to cut down waste and make resin flooring more sustainable, without ever losing out on performance.

"This award isn't just about our product - it's a huge acknowledgment to the belief, hard work and sheer dedication of the whole team. Being the only business in Loughborough to be recognised this year makes it even more special. We're incredibly proud to fly the flag for our town and to show that innovation and sustainability aren't just big-city stories - they're happening right here, in every corner of the UK."

Congratulations to the entire Abacus Flooring team on this incredible achievement - flying the flag for Leicester and inspiring other businesses to keep aiming high.

Go to abacusflooringsolutions.co.uk to find out more.

Greg's golden year



FOR GREG HOLLINGSWORTH, 2024–25 WILL BE REMEMBERED AS SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL. EMILY MILLER CATCHES UP WITH THE LEICESTERSHIRE LAW SOCIETY PRESIDENT TO FIND OUT HIS PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Marking 30 years since qualifying as a solicitor, Greg Hollingsworth took up the presidency of the Leicestershire Law Society (LLS), a role he

calls “an incredible honour and a real full-circle moment”. This October, he makes way for a new president to take over the reins as he completes his year in the role.

“It’s a role I’ve admired for years,” Greg says. “To be entrusted with leading an institution that is over 165 years old was very humbling. It’s a chance to give something back to the profession that’s given me so much.”

Throughout his presidency, Greg has put people and wellbeing at the heart of his agenda. He chose LAMP and YMCA Leicester as the year’s charity partners, two local organisations that reflect his longstanding commitment to mental health support and opportunities for young people.

“You can’t lead in isolation. What I’ve loved about this year is working with such passionate people, inside and outside the legal world. There’s a real drive in Leicestershire and Rutland to support each other, and I’ve felt incredibly lucky to be part of that. The LLS is a real team effort”

From marshalling and running charity parkruns (despite unfavourable weather) to hosting one of the most well-attended LLS Annual Dinners in recent memory, Greg’s time in office has been packed with energy and generosity.

“It was freezing, but the spirit was amazing,” he laughs, recalling the Market

Harborough LLS Wellbeing parkrun. “It’s those small, shared moments outdoors, together, doing something positive that stay with you – that and seeing Gina Samuel-Richards’ eyelashes frozen!”

One of his proudest moments was supporting the Leicestershire Law Society Awards, where the breadth and brilliance of the local legal sector was on full display. “Celebrating others is the best bit. Seeing people beam with pride at what they’ve achieved; those are the nights you remember.”

Away from the legal limelight, Greg continues to serve as a trustee of the Sir Thomas White Loan Charity and an ambassador for LAMP, evidencing a consistent theme in his career: uplifting others through action, not just words.

“I’ve always believed that being part of a profession comes with responsibilities beyond the day job. This year’s just reinforced that for me.”

His message to others in the legal and business communities is to show up, support each other and celebrate the wins, big and small.

“This year has been full of highlights,” he says. “But more than anything, I’ve been reminded how much good there is in our community. You just have to get involved.”

As his presidency draws to a close, it’s clear that Greg’s impact has gone far beyond formal duties. He’s led with warmth, humility and heart, and helped shine a spotlight on the strength of Leicester’s legal community – not just in expertise, but in spirit. Keep up to date with LLS members and events at leicestershirelawsociety.org.uk.



YOUR FACE YOUR BRAND



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- Consider your background, a simple, clean background often works best

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TRUE WELLBEING GOES DEEPER THAN SKIN. BEYOND THE TREATMENTS WE BOOK TO LOOK GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE, THERAPIES LIKE HYPNOTHERAPY ARE HELPING PEOPLE NURTURE CALM, CONFIDENCE AND CONTROL FROM WITHIN WORDS BY EMILY MILLER



▲ KAM KAUR

We rarely think twice about booking a haircut, facial or treatment to boost how we look on the outside. But increasingly, people are realising that real wellbeing begins within. Mental and emotional health are every bit as important as appearance, and therapies such as hypnotherapy are quietly transforming lives.

At the forefront of this shift in Leicester is Kam Kaur, founder of Mindflow Hypnotherapy. From her calming space at Pennbury Farm, just outside the city, as well as online, Kam helps people address issues ranging from anxiety and sleepless nights to confidence and habits that feel hard to break. Her sessions work at a subconscious level, giving clients the opportunity to pause, reset and rebuild a stronger sense of themselves.

Many of the people who walk through Kam's door appear to have everything under control. They're holding down careers, raising families, managing relationships and being the friend that others can always rely on. From the outside, it all looks totally effortless. Yet privately, they describe living with constant worry, self-doubt or an unsettling sense of disconnection from who they really are.

For some, these feelings manifest in patterns such as emotional eating, trouble sleeping or the relentless need to stay busy just to cope. "It's often the people who look the strongest on the outside who are holding the heaviest load inside," Kam observes. Hypnotherapy, she explains, offers something rare: the space to step away from the noise, uncover what's really happening beneath the surface and begin reshaping how they respond to life's challenges.

“ IT'S OFTEN THE PEOPLE WHO LOOK THE STRONGEST ON THE OUTSIDE WHO ARE HOLDING THE HEAVIEST LOAD INSIDE ”

She recalls one client whose anxiety had become overwhelming, spilling into their sleep and even the simplest day-to-day decisions. "After just three sessions, they began to sleep through the night, felt calmer in themselves, and were able to handle challenges without spiralling into panic. For them, the change was described as 'life changing' - not because their circumstances had transformed overnight, but because

they finally felt in control of their reactions."

That sense of regaining control is a theme that comes up again and again in her work. "My clients often describe leaving sessions feeling lighter, calmer and more connected to themselves. Many admit their only regret is not having discovered hypnotherapy sooner!"

What's clear is that investing in inner wellbeing is no longer a luxury. Just as we invest in our

physical appearance, more people are recognising the value of taking care of their inner world. As Kam puts it "When we give ourselves permission to focus on what's happening within, everything else begins to flow with greater ease."

For those ready to explore a new way forward, Mindflow Hypnotherapy is proving to be a powerful and lasting investment in themselves.

Find out more at mindflowhypno.com or call 07359 889609

Getting ready for Christmas 2025 *in Leicester*

A good friend of mine always used to say: "Christmas isn't just a season - it's a way of life!" And I must admit, I'm starting to feel exactly the same. There are so many wonderful ways to embrace Christmas as a lifestyle right here in Leicester! **WORDS BY EMILY MILLER**

A FESTIVE GUIDE

This guide will help you discover how to make the most of the festivities, from shopping for unique gifts and exploring seasonal markets to finding cosy spots for a winter warm-up and enjoying family-friendly activities that bring everyone together.

SHOP SMALL AND STYLISH

When it comes to gift shopping, Leicester's independent boutiques and artisan shops offer something truly unique. Head to the city centre or wander down the Golden Mile in Belgrave, where the festive spirit shines through in vibrant street lights and welcoming shopfronts.

Keep an eye out for local pop-ups and seasonal markets hosted by cafés and delis, where you can pick up everything from handmade chocolates to artisan cheeses, ideal for delicious stocking fillers or that extra-special something for food lovers.

If you prefer a relaxed shopping experience, many of Leicester's shops stay open late during December, allowing for stress-free browsing with festive music filling the air.



COSY UP WITH SEASONAL FLAVOURS

Nothing says Christmas quite like indulging in festive treats, and Leicester has plenty of cosy spots to do just that. Think New Walk, The Lanes, St Peters Square, Abbey Park, Town Hall Square and Allandale Road. Independent cafés around town are

buzzing with seasonal pop-ups serving up everything from spiced lattes to indulgent mince pies.

For a unique twist on traditional fare, don't miss the Indian restaurants along the Golden Mile, offering festive specials that blend traditional spices with Christmas flavours, a



delicious way to celebrate Leicester's multicultural heritage.

And if you want to bring the festive spirit home, many local shops stock artisan chocolates, speciality teas and warming mulled wine kits, perfect for gifting or treating yourself.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY FESTIVITIES

Santa Claus is scheduled to visit various spots, including a free grotto at the Haymarket on December 7 and weekend appearances at Highcross shopping centre through to December 23, ideal opportunities for kids to meet Father Christmas and share their Christmas wishes.

For a touch of nature, look out for seasonal fairs featuring Nativity trails, sleigh selfie opportunities and even chances to spot reindeer. Despite the chill, winter walks and outdoor activities remain popular in Leicester during December.

As the festive season unfolds, Leicester offers something for everyone, whether it's the joy of discovering special gifts, the comfort of cosy cafés or the laughter shared during family outings. Embrace the spirit of the city this Christmas and make memories that will last long after the decorations are packed away.



GIVING BACK AND SHARING THE SPIRIT

Christmas is also a season of giving. Leicester's community spirit shines through during this time, with numerous charity drives and volunteering opportunities. Consider supporting local food banks, donating toys to children's charities or volunteering at community events. Here are a few organisations that are always looking for volunteers! Google search the following charities for more information on volunteering.

LEICESTERSHIRE CARES

A local charity focused on connecting volunteers with community projects, Leicestershire Cares runs festive activities like decorating community spaces and hosting holiday parties for vulnerable groups. They coordinate volunteers to spread festive cheer throughout the city.

CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS

Part of the national homelessness charity Crisis, their Christmas campaign provides food, shelter, companionship and support to people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers help serve meals, run activities and offer vital company during the holiday season.

AGE UK LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

This organisation supports older adults across the region, especially during Christmas when loneliness can be most acute. Volunteers

help organise festive lunches, offer companionship visits and assist with events designed to bring joy to older people.

LEICESTER HOSPITALS CHARITY

This charity supports patients at Leicester's hospitals, especially those who must spend Christmas in care. Volunteers help deliver gifts and spread festive cheer to adult inpatients, aiming to make their hospital stay a little brighter during the holidays.

LEICESTER CITY OF SANCTUARY

Supporting refugees and asylum seekers, Leicester City of Sanctuary hosts Christmas parties and community events that create a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. Volunteers assist with organising and running these celebrations, helping to build connection and joy.





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yoga-house.co.uk



A Growing Crisis for Teen Mental Health Support

Teen mental health in the UK is at a critical point. In 2023, one in five children and young people aged 8 to 25 had a probable mental health condition. This marks a steady rise over the past decade, reflecting the growing pressures facing today's younger generation *WORDS BY EMILY MILLER*

RISING PREVALENCE

- 1 in 5 young people (8-25) with a probable mental health condition.
- 50% of all conditions begin by age 14.
- 75% begin by age 24.
- 12.5% of 17-19-year-olds have an eating disorder.

SCHOOL IMPACT

- 30% of pupils with mental health conditions miss at least one week of school.
- 10% of pupils without conditions miss the same as above.
- 74% of teachers say mental health affects learning.

WAITING TIMES

- 500,000+ referrals to CAMHS in 2023.
- 79,000 waited over a year.
- 44% waited more than two years.
- 59% reported their condition worsened while waiting.

By the time young people reach their mid-teens, the picture is already clear: half of all mental health problems start by the age of 14, rising to three-quarters by 24. These early years matter; it's more than 'teen traits' and the numbers show just how urgent the need for support has become.

Eating disorders are one of the fastest-growing concerns. Among 17 to 19-year-olds, more than one in ten are now identified as having an eating disorder. Young women are particularly affected, with rates almost four times higher than their male peers.

Sleep is another area that's taking a hit. Almost every young adult with a probable mental health condition reports disrupted sleep, leaving them more exhausted, more anxious and less able to cope with the demands of daily life. Unsurprisingly, this is having an impact in the classroom. In 2023, three in ten pupils with mental health needs missed at least a week of school, compared with just one in ten of their peers. Teachers are seeing it too: nearly three-quarters say poor mental health is holding pupils back from learning.

Behind the scenes, services are struggling to keep pace. Over half a million young people were referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in 2023, yet tens of thousands are still waiting for help - some for more than two years.

The message is clear: teen mental health needs are rising, but awareness is stronger than ever. With continued investment and the expansion of specialist support, there's a real opportunity to close the gap and give young people the timely, effective care they deserve.

WHERE TO FIND FREE HELP:

YoungMinds Textline:

Text YM to 85258 for free, 24/7 support if you're a young person experiencing a mental health crisis.

Childline: Call 0800 1111 for free, confidential support for anyone under 19. Available 24/7.

YoungMinds Parents Helpline:

Call 0808 802 5544 (Monday-Friday, 9.30am-4pm).

Coaching the next generation



The challenges facing young people today are unlike any before. Between the lasting impact of the pandemic, the relentless influence of social media and uncertainty about their futures, teenagers are navigating a complex world. Life coach Sonia Viner is helping them find the tools to build resilience, confidence and hope **WORDS BY EMILY MILLER**

When I sit down with Sonia Viner, a Leicestershire-based life coach, she speaks with a quiet authority that comes from years of working with young people in often difficult circumstances. “Teenagers today live under pressures that my generation never faced,” she reflects. “Unlike us, they don’t get to make mistakes in private. One post, one screenshot, one video can follow them for years.”

It’s a sobering thought, but Sonia’s work is all about creating space and light in what can feel like a crowded, overwhelming world.

Her clients range from young people struggling with school refusals and detentions, to teenagers anxious about their friendships or future careers. Many, she says, are deeply aware of their mental health yet feel less resilient when setbacks occur.

“They’re growing up in a world shaped by COVID, social media and now AI,” Sonia explains. “They know their

futures will look different, so they have to be more adaptable with their goals and ambitions. But that uncertainty can chip away at their confidence and self-worth.”

This is where coaching steps in. Unlike counselling, which tends to explore past experiences, or mentoring, which offers guidance, coaching is about looking forward. “My job isn’t to fix them or tell them what to do,” Sonia says. “It’s to give them tools to figure out who they are, what matters to them and how they want to get there.”

realise: ‘Actually, I am resilient, I am capable,’” she says with a smile. “That’s when change happens. They start making connections between who they are and what they want their future to look like.”

Parents and schools often report tangible results: young people returning to lessons, engaging more positively with peers or simply feeling more hopeful. But for Sonia, the real achievement is subtler. “It’s about helping them step into a future they can feel confident about,” she explains.

Whether she’s working online, in

“It’s a wonderful moment when they realise, ‘Actually, I am resilient, I am capable. That’s when change happens’”

Her approach is pluralistic – flexible, client-led and deeply personal. With nearly 20 years in probation and youth offending services and an MSc in Psychology, Sonia draws from a broad toolkit. In practice, it often begins with small, everyday conversations about school, hobbies or friends. From there, Sonia gently draws out strengths and values that the young person may never have noticed in themselves.

“It’s a wonderful moment when they

schools or face-to-face at her private practice, Sonia’s mission is the same: to provide a safe, supportive space where young people can pause, reflect and grow.

In a world that often moves too fast, her message is clear: resilience isn’t something young people are born with – it’s something they can build, with the right support.

For more about Sonia’s work, visit soniaviner.co.uk.

When did you last ask yourself *‘How am I, really?’*

When was the last time you paused long enough to ask yourself a simple, but powerful question: ‘How am I, really?’ I caught up with Blossoms Counselling Co founder Teresa Lewis, who suggests that periodic check-ins are essential maintenance for mental wellbeing

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER



It sounds obvious, but many of us rarely check in with ourselves after dealing with so many deadlines, family responsibilities and endless to-do lists. We push on through, convincing ourselves that tomorrow will be easier or that we’ll rest when things calm down. But too often, that calm never comes.

Blossoms Counselling Co, based in Market Harborough, is inviting us to challenge that cycle by asking ourselves for a few minutes every week: “How am I, really?” Its founder, Teresa Lewis, is a highly qualified counsellor with extensive experience and a deep-rooted passion for helping people, believes counselling isn’t just for crisis moments, it’s for everyone.

“So many of us only think about seeking therapy when we’ve reached breaking point,” she explains. “But counselling can be a space for self-discovery, reflection and growth at any stage of life. You don’t have to wait until you feel completely overwhelmed to reach out.”

The practice offers a warm, compassionate environment where individuals can step back from the chaos of daily life and take an honest look at how they’re really doing. It’s about creating space for voices, especially our own, that often go unheard.

We know counselling can feel daunting, especially if you’ve never tried it before. But Blossoms is dedicated to making the process welcoming and supportive every step of the way.

“I want people to feel safe, accepted, and truly heard,” the founder shares. “Sometimes we carry unresolved feelings from the past – grief, trauma, or painful relationships that continue to shape our present. Talking it through in a supportive space can open the door to healing and resilience.”

The practice provides support across a range of challenges, from anxiety and stress to trauma and loss, but it also welcomes those who simply feel a little ‘stuck’ or disconnected. That’s part of Blossoms’ wider message: counselling is not just a response to crisis, but an act of self-care.

“When someone takes that step, they’re saying: ‘My feelings matter. I matter.’ That shift alone can be incredibly empowering; counselling opens up new pathways within our self-awareness, creating that first step toward healing, resilience, and growth,” she says.

In a culture that often prizes productivity over wellbeing, Teresa is gently reminding us of the importance of emotional check-ins. Just as we go to the gym to strengthen our bodies, or book dental check-ups to prevent problems later, therapy can serve as regular maintenance for the mind and mental well-being.

Whether you’re navigating a life change, dealing with complex emotions or simply curious to explore your inner world, Blossoms offers a safe space to begin. Start with those emotional check-ins in the mirror and ask yourself how you’re *really* doing.

Start your journey today with a check in and by visiting blossomscounsellingco.co.uk or book a free 30-minute consultation at enquiries@blossomscounsellingco.co.uk

“When someone takes that step, they’re saying: ‘My feelings matter. I matter.’ That shift alone can be incredibly empowering”

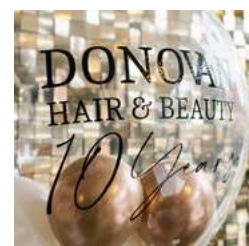


TINA DONOVAN

As Donovan Hair & Beauty celebrates ten years, its focus on slower-paced, non-judgemental client care stands out in an industry often defined by surface-level gloss. Emily Miller visits on their 10th birthday to find out how



YOUR HAIR, YOUR SPACE, YOUR WAY



In an industry where image can often feel like everything, Donovan Hair & Beauty has quietly spent the last ten years building something refreshingly different. It's a place where clients don't feel the pressure to 'do' their hair or makeup before stepping through the door. Where consultations take time, conversations are genuine, and no one feels like they're being rushed in and out of a chair.

Founded in 2015 by owner Tina Donovan, the salon in Blaby started with a simple intention: to create a space where people could feel at ease, regardless of how polished, or unpolished, they arrived. "We wanted to build a salon where clients feel like themselves, not like they're being judged or need to present a certain way just to fit in," Tina explains.

This ethos of creating a non-judgemental, welcoming environment has remained central to how the salon

operates today. Appointments are deliberately paced, and consultations really dive into what helps clients feel good as good and as much like themselves as possible.

One of the more thoughtful evolutions within the salon has been the addition of a private quiet room, a dedicated space for clients who prefer a more discreet or calm environment. Whether used for fitting hairpieces, personal comfort, or simply a quiet space away from the main salon floor, it reflects the business's attention to individual experience.

As the team has grown to 13, the core values of kindness, respect and taking the time to genuinely listen have remained unchanged. Tina describes the growth of the salon not in terms of numbers, but in the depth of connection they've built with their loyal client base. "Our clients are people we've got to know over years. It's a

relationship, not a transaction."

Professional development at the salon is both a personal journey and a team commitment. Every member regularly attends advanced training sessions across the UK, keeping their skills sharp and their creativity inspired. Skill-sharing is deeply embedded in the salon's culture, ensuring that stylists and beauticians not only grow individually but also support each other's evolution. This collaborative approach allows the team to stay ahead of industry trends while remaining grounded in the core values that define their work.

For Tina Donovan, it's a simple philosophy: "We want people to feel like they belong here, just as they are. That's always been the heart of what we do; and we plan on doing so for many more decades to come!"

OFFER: Quote NICHE to get 25% off your first visit for a wash cut/finish



Botox: confidence and safety

For many business professionals, confidence is a key currency. It influences how we lead teams, win clients and present ourselves in competitive environments.

Increasingly, treatments like Botox are becoming part of that confidence toolkit. But while demand has skyrocketed, so too has the risk—because not every provider is playing by the same rulebook WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

In August, BBC London visited Amedics in Leicester to film Dr Ameera Laher and interview clients as part of a documentary, due to air this October, highlighting the rapid rise of Botox treatments. The programme raises an important question: as more people seek these procedures, how do we separate safe practice from unsafe shortcuts?

The hidden dangers behind 'cheap' Botox

Let's tackle the elephant in the room: price. If you're offered Botox at a bargain rate, alarm bells should be ringing. Real, regulated Botox is not

cheap – and for good reason. It's a prescription-only medicine. That means it cannot simply be bought online or stocked in a salon cupboard. It requires a qualified prescriber, usually a doctor, to assess your suitability before you're even allowed access to it.

Once you add up that high cost of authentic product with correct storage, appropriate insurance, and the expertise of a medical professional, suddenly those too-good-to-be-true offers start to look exactly that.

The truth is, if it's cheap, it's not real Botox. At best, it's a diluted or poor-quality substitute. At worst, it's an unlicensed product being injected by someone with little to no training. The result? Potential disfigurement, long-term nerve damage, and in some cases, hospitalisation. The industry is rife with horror stories, and most share the same theme – cutting corners on cost and qualifications.

Why a doctor-led clinic changes everything

This is where doctor-led clinics like Amedics stand apart. Headed by Dr Ameera, an international Key Opinion Leader (KOL) who works with the most respected brands in skincare, Amedics doesn't just administer treatments – it champions best practice across the industry.

When a clinic is led by a doctor, you're not only assured of medical-grade training but also of an ethical approach to patient care. That means:

- A consultation and medical assessment before any prescription is written.
- Use of genuine, regulated Botox – not a counterfeit substitute.
- Safe administration that considers both anatomy and aesthetics.
- Proper aftercare and accountability.

Put simply: you're not a number. You're a patient, and your safety is prioritised over sales.

Beyond the needle: confidence with integrity

For business leaders, executives and entrepreneurs, how we feel about our



DR AMEERA LAHER

appearance feeds directly into how we show up at work. A well-placed Botox treatment can soften lines, restore a fresher appearance and bolster self-confidence without altering identity. But it should never come at the expense of safety.

Choosing a doctor-led clinic is about aligning the decision with the values we already uphold in business: trust, credibility and due diligence. Just as you wouldn't strike a deal without checking credentials, you shouldn't hand over your face to anyone without proof of expertise.

Doing your homework

Before booking any treatment, ask:

- Is the clinic doctor-led and prescription-based?
- Can they prove they use genuine, regulated Botox?
- Do they have a track record of safe,

satisfied clients?

■ Are their prices reflective of the real cost of the product and the skill required?

If the answer to any of these is vague or evasive, walk away.

Leading the way

With media attention mounting and documentaries like the BBC's set to shine a spotlight on the darker side of the industry, clinics like Amedics are paving the way for safer standards. Dr Ameera's work with global skincare brands reinforces not only her expertise but also her role as an industry voice, advocating for professionalism in a market that has seen too many corners cut.

For professionals who value both confidence and integrity, the message is clear: Botox is not the problem, but where and how you get it matters.

Christmas gift guide



LECHUZA Self-watering planter with water level indicator £19.79

The Cube in glossy scarlet red is a self-watering planter ensuring the plant receives the optimal amount of water and micronutrients. thelechuza.co.uk



Dexham School of Wok Dabba £25.00

A stainless steel handy storage tin, includes 7 spice pots and a spoon to hold your favourite Asian spices. dexham.co.uk



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A ten-item gift box filled with a gourmet selection of indulgent, warming delights, from hearty soups to spiced chutney, sweet fig jam and zesty lemon curd. baxtersofscotland.com



Tracklements Christmas Cracker £11.40

Vegan and gluten free Christmas Spice Chutney, Cranberry, Port & Orange Sauce and Sticky Fig Relish. tracklements.co.uk

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Maison Louis Jadot Mâcon Blanc and Beaujolais Duo Wine Set £28.00

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A man with a beard, wearing a blue suit and tie, is sitting on a blue sofa. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the foreground, there is a chessboard with several chess pieces. The background is a dark blue wall with a framed picture. A lamp is visible on the left side of the frame.

THE GRANDMASTER OF LUXURY HOMES

In the refined world of luxury Leicestershire homes, one name stands out: Harry Singh, Director of Fine & Country Leicester, as well as Founder of Signature Homes and Signature Lettings. Niche Editor Emily Miller caught up with Harry to talk luxury, location and the current temperature for property in the region

Luxury property expert Harry Singh's expert approach is more than transactional. He believes a home is a foundation for life, a stage for family memories and a legacy to be passed down. In conversation, it's clear he views his work as an honour: matching people to spaces that shape their lives.

With over 15 years of experience, including a formative chapter in the fast-paced London market, Harry brings a unique blend of aspiration, warmth, and precision to his clients and the region's luxury property scene. Much like a grandmaster at the chessboard, Harry balances foresight and strategy, anticipating needs several moves ahead while never losing sight of the bigger picture.

For Harry, luxury isn't defined by numbers, but by the sense of comfort, connection and possibility that a home provides. What struck me most in speaking with him was how personable and approachable he is, with a genuine passion for property that comes through in every conversation. Alongside his team, he continues to shape Leicestershire's property market, helping clients find not just houses, but places where their lives can unfold.

Emily: Welcome, Harry! What led you to specialise in Leicestershire's premium property market, and to launch Signature Homes and Lettings?

Harry: My career began in Newcastle upon Tyne, where I built my early foundations in property before moving to London, which gave me invaluable exposure to the pace and polish of the high-net-worth market. Those years in the capital instilled precision, discretion and an understanding that success lies not only in the property itself but also in the lifestyle and aspirations it represents. A business opportunity eventually brought us to Leicester and, together with my wife Aman and our two sons, we enjoyed living here so much that it soon became our home – a place where I could combine professional ambition with the lifestyle we truly valued.

When I returned, I realised there

was a real space in the market for a service that combined that London polish with Leicestershire's warmth. That vision led to Signature Homes, created to spotlight the region's hidden gems and character-rich properties. From there, Signature Lettings followed, born out of the belief that tenants deserve the same elevated experience as buyers. Both brands sit alongside Fine & Country, but give us the freedom to deliver something distinctively our own.

What's important to us is that these businesses aren't run in isolation – they're very much a family effort. While I focus primarily on Fine & Country, my wife, Aman Bhullar, is Co-Director of Signature Lettings and Director of Signature Sales. She spearheads the lettings business, overseeing a large portfolio of professional and family lets, and has been instrumental in shaping its growth.

“You can update interiors, extend kitchens, remodel bathrooms but you cannot change where a home is set!”

Our Sales Manager, Jack Hunt, plays a pivotal role in driving growth and supporting clients through every stage of their journey. Though the cover features just Aman and me, Jack's contribution is central to our success and his presence in the team photo is a fitting reminder that our achievements are always collective.

E: You're part of the nationwide prestigious Fine & Country; how does the Leicester branch distinguish itself?

H: Fine & Country is renowned for its global reach and sophisticated marketing, but at the Leicester branch we've taken that foundation and added a distinctly personal approach.

We're small enough to know every client by name, to remember their children's birthdays, to understand not just their immediate needs but their future plans. Yet, because of the Fine & Country network, we also have access to international audiences and a level of

brand prestige that elevates every listing.

It's the best of both worlds: intimacy and care at the local level, combined with a global platform that gives our clients the visibility their properties deserve. We're not just selling houses, we're showcasing lifestyles to the right people, wherever they might be.

E: Do you find joy in the process of matching people with their homes?

H: Absolutely, it's the part that keeps me motivated every single day. For me, there's nothing more rewarding than seeing a client's face light up when they walk into a property and instinctively know: 'this is the one'.

I often tell people that we provide the house, but they create the home. My job is to introduce them to the right setting, the right layout, the right potential. But it's the client who fills it with personality, warmth, and

memories. That's the magic. It's these moments that remind me this isn't just a career – it's a privilege.

E: In your view, what's the single biggest indicator of whether a property will be the right fit?

H: Location. Every time. You can update interiors, extend kitchens, remodel bathrooms... but you cannot change where a home is set! Location defines the rhythm of daily life: the school run, the evening walk, the commute, the view from the window. It influences who your neighbours are, whether you feel part of a community, and the lifestyle you'll enjoy.

For families, proximity to good schools is often the deciding factor. For professionals, it might be access to transport links. For others, it's about being close to countryside or a particular village community. What unites them all is that location is the

“ I always encourage clients to think deeply about how they live day to day, because a beautiful home in the wrong location will never feel right ”

thread running through every decision.

I always encourage clients to think deeply about how they live day to day, because a beautiful home in the wrong location will never feel right. But when the setting matches the lifestyle, it's seamless, it just clicks.

E: Let's talk lettings. How does that elevate the rental experience?

H: The rental market is often overlooked when it comes to luxury. People assume that tenants aren't looking for the same quality as buyers, but that simply isn't true. Many professionals, families and even downsizers prefer the flexibility of renting, but they still want a beautiful home that matches their lifestyle.

With Signature Lettings, we apply the same standards as we do with sales: carefully chosen properties,

marketed with elegance and managed with care. It's about respect, respecting tenants as valued clients and respecting landlords by presenting their properties in the best light.

I think this is why Signature Lettings has grown so quickly. People recognise that we're raising the bar for rentals.

E: How have buyers' desires evolved in recent years?

H: Lifestyle is front and centre. We've seen demand soar for homes with gardens, flexible spaces that can double as offices, privacy with gated properties and layouts that support family life in a way that feels calm and comfortable. People realised that home isn't just where you sleep; it's where you live, work, entertain, and recharge.

There's also been a noticeable shift

toward countryside and village living. Clients are more willing to move out of urban centres if it means they gain space, tranquility and a stronger sense of community. Leicestershire, with its perfect balance of accessibility to London, transport links and beauty, has really benefited from that trend.

E: Lastly, what future do you envision for your place in property in the area?

H: My vision is simple: to keep raising the standard. I want Fine & Country Leicester to be the first name people think of when they picture luxury homes. I want Signature Homes to continue celebrating unique, characterful properties, and for Signature Lettings to redefine the rental experience.

Long-term, I see us building a legacy; one rooted in trust, taste, and transformation. For me, it's not about being the biggest. It's about being the best. Like in chess, it's not about the speed of the game, but the strength of the endgame – building a legacy move by move, with precision and purpose.





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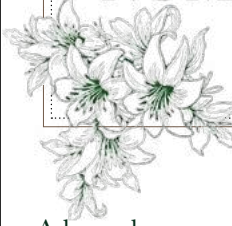
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Family business goes from strength to strength

Leasing Made Simple: A New Era for Vehicle Leasing in the Midlands

In the ever-evolving landscape of vehicle leasing, where innovation meets customer-centric service, one family-run business is making waves with a fresh identity and a renewed commitment to excellence. After 11 successful years as Vehicle Consulting Midlands, Paul and Jayne Stephenson have rebranded their company as Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd, marking a significant milestone in their journey.

A Family Legacy

At the heart of Leasing Made Simple is a family ethos that prioritises personal relationships and exceptional service. Paul and Jayne, both directors of the company, have infused their passion for customer satisfaction into every aspect of their business. Their hands-on approach ensures that clients receive tailored solutions to meet their unique needs, making the leasing process straightforward and truly enjoyable.

Since launching the rebranded company last October, Leasing Made Simple has experienced remarkable growth. "We've gone from strength to strength," Paul shares, reflecting on the journey. "Our focus has always been on providing the best deals and outstanding customer service, and our new name embodies that commitment."

A Fresh Start with a Clear Vision

The decision to rebrand was not made lightly. After over a decade of building a reputation in the Midlands, Paul and Jayne recognised the need for a name that better reflects their mission and values. "Leasing Made Simple encapsulates what we strive to achieve for our customers," Jayne explains. "We want to demystify the leasing process and make it accessible to everyone, whether they are individuals or businesses."

The new name also aligns with their vision of expanding their offerings. With an extensive range of vehicles available, from compact cars to luxury SUVs, Leasing Made Simple is poised to cater to a diverse clientele. The company ensures customers get competitive pricing and high-quality vehicles.

Customer-Centric Approach

What truly sets Leasing Made Simple apart is its unwavering commitment to customer service. The Stephenson family

understands that leasing a vehicle can be a daunting task. Their aim is to simplify the process, providing clear guidance and support.

"Our customers are at the heart of everything we do," Jayne emphasises. "We take the time to listen to their needs and provide personalised solutions that fit their lifestyle and budget."

As word spreads about their exceptional offerings, Leasing Made Simple has seen an increase in demand, allowing them to expand their fleet and enhance their services. "We're thrilled to be able to offer more vehicles and better deals than ever before," Paul adds.

Looking Ahead

As Leasing Made Simple continues to grow, Paul and Jayne remain committed to their core values of integrity, transparency and family-oriented service. With their rebranding complete and a solid foundation in place, the Stephenson family is excited about the road ahead. "We're just getting started," Paul says, with a smile. "Our mission is to make vehicle leasing simple and enjoyable for everyone – and we can't wait to see where this journey takes us."

In a world where customer service often takes a back seat, Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd is steering the industry in a new direction – one that prioritises the customer experience and embraces the values of a family-run business. As they embark on this new chapter, one thing is clear – the future of vehicle leasing in the Midlands has never looked brighter.



Paul Stephenson

40 years in the automotive industry at management level



Jayne Stephenson

Jayne comes from a family that has been in the automotive industry for over 70 years



Leasing Made Simple (Midlands) Ltd

Contact Paul Stephenson: paul.stephenson@afl.co.uk or 0116 366 9502

Bring light to the season

When autumn tips into winter and the days grow shorter, it can be tempting to long for summer's warmth. But there's a unique charm to the darker months in Leicestershire

WORDS BY EMILY MILLER

The air turns crisp, the countryside takes on a golden glow, and suddenly life feels like it's wrapped in a woolly jumper. Far from being a season to endure, autumn and winter here are full of opportunities to slow down, savour and reconnect with the things that bring us joy.

STEP INTO NATURE

Nothing beats stepping outside on a frosty morning, breath hanging in the air, as you crunch your way through a carpet of leaves. Bradgate Park is a favourite for this time of year; deer wander freely, the bracken turns shades of copper and the walk up to Old John Tower rewards you with views that make the world feel wide open.

Over at Beacon Hill, climbing to the summit on a chilly afternoon delivers

an energising rush, followed by the satisfaction of rosy cheeks and a well-earned cup of tea. For something gentler, Swithland Woods offers quiet trails where the light filters softly through bare branches, creating a sense of calm that only winter woodland can bring. Even a short wander can lift the spirits and bring back a sense of perspective.

THE JOY OF COSY CAFÉS

Of course, embracing the season doesn't always mean braving the cold for hours. Sometimes the best way to enjoy the darker months is to lean into their cosiness. Leicester's café culture makes this delightfully easy. Pull up a chair at St Martin's Coffee and settle in with a flat white as the Cathedral bells chime outside. Or head to The Tiny

Bakery in Clarendon Park, where the scent of fresh pastries instantly lifts the mood.

There's something deeply comforting about watching the world go by from behind a fogged-up café window, a steaming mug warming your hands. In Loughborough, The Larder is a firm favourite for its welcoming atmosphere and wholesome food, while Brew offers a laid-back vibe that's perfect for whiling away a slow winter morning. These spaces invite us not just to escape the cold, but to enjoy it from a safe, snug distance.

SELF-CARE

And if you're in the mood for a treat? Leicestershire has you covered. Ragdale Hall Spa, near Melton Mowbray, is a sanctuary when the days are short. Slipping into their candlelit pools or basking in the glow of a sauna while the countryside outside lies dusted with frost feels positively magical. Even spending just a few hours here can leave you feeling as though the season is something to

celebrate, rather than escape.

But self-care doesn't always need to mean luxury. It could be as simple as lighting a candle at home, curling up with a book or cooking a warming meal. The darker months give us permission to slow down and savour these small, nourishing rituals.

Winter can be a wonderful time to find joy in movement. A brisk walk around Watermead Country Park, with its glittering lakes and lively birdlife, is as refreshing as it is calming. Joining a yoga class at the Attenborough Arts Centre can also be a balm for body and mind, while a swim in Leicester's city pools adds a playful splash to gloomy days. The key is to see movement not as a chore, but as a chance to embrace the season in a different way.

So, this season, wrap up, step out and embrace the magic Leicestershire has to offer. Whether it's the wild beauty of Charnwood, the snug cafés tucked into city streets or the indulgence of a spa day, there's so much to enjoy. The darker months don't have to dim your spirit!

WRAP UP & WANDER: TOP 5 WINTER WALKING SPOTS

1 Bradgate Park Ancient oaks, roaming deer and sweeping views.

2 Beacon Hill A brisk climb with breathtaking panoramas.

3 Swithland Woods Peaceful woodland paths for quiet reflection.

4 Watermead Country Park Lakeside trails alive with birdlife.

5 Market Bosworth Country Park A charming mix of woodland and open parkland.

SIP & SETTLE: TOP 5 COSY CAFÉS

1 St Martin's Coffee, Leicester A city-centre favourite for work and people-watching.

2 The Tiny Bakery, Clarendon Park Famous for pastries and friendly faces.

3 Brew, Leicester Relaxed vibes and quality coffee.

4 The Larder, Loughborough Wholesome food with a community feel.

5 The Cosy Club, Leicester Aptly named, with velvet sofas and vintage charm.

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CULTURE

FESTIVE MAGIC THROUGH MUSIC AND THEATRE

Christmas isn't just about the lights and shopping, it's about those special moments we share through live music and theatre. Emily Miller dives into the city's festive line-up of pantomimes, musicals and candlelit concerts

Leicester's festive season truly comes alive through its vibrant theatre and music scene, offering something for every age and taste. Whether you're singing along at a lively pantomime, being swept away by a musical or soaking up the magic of a candlelit concert, these experiences capture the heart of Christmas in the city. So, wrap up warm, gather your loved ones and let Leicester's culture light up your festive celebrations this year.

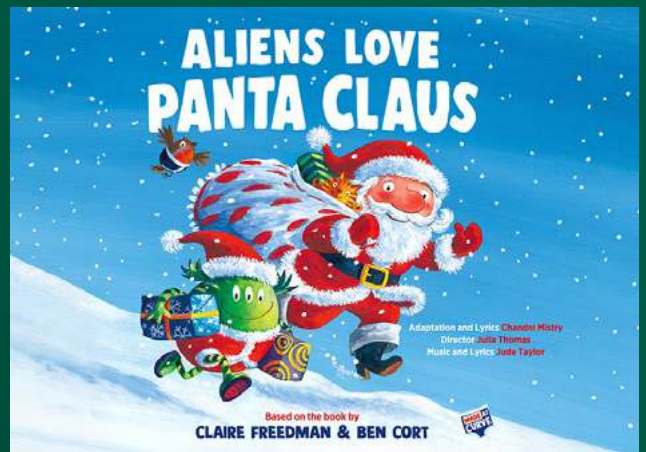
PANTOMIME MAGIC AT DE MONTFORT HALL

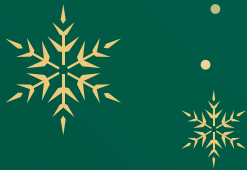
Christmas and pantos are inseparable in Leicester, and De Montfort Hall delivers festive joy with flair. This year's Dick Whittington, running from December 12, 2025 to January 3, 2026, features Richie Anderson in his panto debut as Alderman Fitzwarren, joined by Suzanne Shaw, Jarred Christmas, Jack Ballard and beatboxer Hobbitt as Tommy the Cat. With audience participation, catchy songs and local talent at every turn, it's the must see family show of the season.

CURVE THEATRE'S FESTIVE SHOWSTOPPERS

If there's one place that captures the magic of Christmas in Leicester, it's Curve Theatre. This December, their stage will be alive with the heart-warming classic "The Sound of Music", running right through to 17 January 2026. With its iconic songs and feel-good story, it's the perfect treat for families looking to create those unforgettable festive memories.

For little ones (and big kids at heart), the delightful





Aliens Love Panta Claus lands at Curve from December 2-4 2025. Expect giggles, festive fun, and a brilliantly bonkers adventure that's ideal for a family day out in the run-up to Christmas.

Adding a sprinkle of backstage magic, *The Sound of Music* Theatre Day on December 4 2025 invites theatre lovers behind the scenes, offering a glimpse into the wonder of how a musical is brought to life.

Then, as we welcome the New Year, laughter takes centre stage with *Eric and Ern*, a joyful tribute to comedy legends Morecambe and Wise, from January 6 - 17 2026.

Whether you're in the mood for sing-alongs, silly aliens or good old-fashioned belly laughs, Curve's winter season is set to wrap you in a big festive hug.



THE LITTLE THEATRE'S COMMUNITY SPIRIT

For something more intimate, The Little Theatre in Dover Street presents *Dick Whittington* from December 12, 2025 to January 4, 2026. This community-led production by Leicester Drama Society offers pantomime charm with a local twist; cosy seating, local performers and that uniquely Leicester humour. Ideal for families looking for something heartfelt, grassroots and full of festive cheer.

EXTRA FESTIVE FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES

Whether it's a quiet moment with Santa or a lively workshop at Curve, Leicester's Christmas experiences offer meaningful ways to mark the season. It's this balance of tradition and thoughtfully new experiences that makes the city's festive calendar great for everyone!

MEET SANTA

One of the most popular festive highlights is the Santa's Grotto at Highcross Shopping Centre, open from December 7-22, with an additional day on December 23 for last-minute visits. The grotto is set in a winter-themed environment where children can meet Santa Claus and his elves, take part in storytelling sessions and enjoy festive crafts. The centre also offers a quieter time on Sundays between 11am and 12pm for families who prefer a less busy experience.

For a more outdoorsy and traditional festive experience, Bradgate Park hosts its Santa's Grotto on select dates: December 6, 7, 13, 14, and 19-24. This grotto experience combines nature walks with festive activities and includes a gift for every child. The natural setting of the park adds a unique charm to this seasonal visit.

ACT YOUR CHRISTMASSY HEART OUT

Creative families will appreciate the Curve Theatre's Christmas Workshops on December 16, which include interactive storytelling, music and craft activities that immerse children in the spirit of the season. The workshops are an excellent way to encourage artistic expression and bring festive stories to life.

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS AND SPACE COMBINED

Adding a modern twist to festive fun, the National Space Centre's Cosmic Christmas event on December 5 offers an educational yet entertaining experience. With space-themed shows and activities designed to captivate young minds, this event marries the wonder of the cosmos with holiday cheer.

CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS AT LEICESTER CATHEDRAL

If music is your way of getting into the festive spirit, Leicester Cathedral is the place to be. On December 6, the Piccadilly Sinfonietta will perform Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* by Candlelight, alongside Pachelbel's *Canon in D* and Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*. The combination of baroque masterpieces and the stunning candlelit setting promises an unforgettable evening.

Then, on December 13, the Leicester Symphony Orchestra, joined by the Leicester Philharmonic Choir, will fill the Cathedral with festive classics. Their *Christmas Cathedral Concert* is a highlight of the city's musical calendar, blending orchestral grandeur with heart-warming carols.

SPOOKY LEICESTERSHIRE

BE WARNED, THIS ISN'T FOR THE FAINT OF HEART!

Halloween is a spooky time, but it's not just trick or treats. This is the time for hauntings and horror. Here are some of the spookiest and haunted places in Leicester

Words by Danniella Itorma

WINSTANLEY HOUSE

The history of Winstanley House is seeped in tales of the supernatural, earning it a reputation for being haunted. Located within Braunstone Park, the Braunstone Hall was built in 1776 for a wealthy Winstanley family. Its 1000 acres of land would provide hunting, fishing and shooting.

According to legend, the most enduring phantom is believed to be a nun. May and Georgina Winstanley entered the Roman Catholic covenant of the Order of the Sacred Heart.

A year later, May fell victim to tuberculosis. Fast forward to 1922, eight-year-old Rosemary was walking the corridor from the bathroom to the nursery when she noticed a figure all dressed in white floating some feet ahead. Curious, she followed the strange figure until it went into the Governess's room. She was told not to worry when she asked the nanny.

Several years later, several of the children contracted measles and were isolated in two rooms of the nursery wing. The nursery maid, Bessie, stayed in the governess's room and a bed was set up. One night, terrifying screams erupted and Bessie had suddenly awoken to see a young female next to her.

She had a long white dress and her face was obscured by a veil. Later, it was found out that May Winstanley was a novice nun at the time of her illness and would have had white robes. It was also discovered that the governess's room belonged to May.

SPOOKY BRADGATE

The most famous story to come out of Bradgate Park was Lady Jane Grey's ghost. She was only 16 years old when she became the Queen of England only for nine days. Mary claimed the throne and placed Jane in a prison. On February 12, 1554 she was executed on Tower Green at the Tower of London.

Bradgate Park, now a public park in Charnwood Forest, was once the family home of Lady Jane Grey; the ruins remain on the site today. Visitors to the park say that they have seen her ghost appear on Christmas Eve while her coach is said to trot through the park between the old church and the ruins of her former home, pulled by headless horses.

If you want to know more, or experience walking through Bradgate Park at night, join the ghost walk.

THE GUILDHALL

Within the heart of Leicester, the Guildhall is the centre of Leicester's history for 630 years. Over the years it has been used as a court, town hall, prison, a venue for Shakespeare and now a museum and venue. It was built in 1390 when its Great Hall was a meeting place and a banquet hall for the Guild of Corpus Christi.

Five main ghosts have been reported, first of which was believed to be a Medieval Monk of Corpus Christi Guild during the late 14th century. His presence was often seen in the library, slowly walking across the rooms and stopping. He would stand in front of the King James I bible with it wide open. At the end of the day, the bible would be closed, but by the next morning staff have reported coming into the building seeing the bible back open again.

BELGRAVE HALL

This was built as a family house for Edmund and Ann Cradock in 1709 in the midst of the walled gardens in Belgrave. However, both Edmund and Ann sadly passed away just two years after it was completed. It was then owned by several families including the Simsons, the Vanns and the Ellises. In 1936, it was bought by Leicester City Council and transformed into a museum.

In 1999, Belgrave Hall became infamous across the world when two ghostly figures were recorded on security cameras outside the Hall. To this day, ghost hunters remain interested with a number of unexplained sightings. The International Society for Paranormal Research (ISPR) visited Belgrave Hall and found quite a few cold spots and residual energies at the building.

It was also reported that numerous visitors saw an old-fashioned lady on the stairs as well as hearing footsteps behind them with no one there.



OLD TOWN TRAILS

LEICESTER'S FREE TRAILS HISTORY, ART & FUN FOR ALL

Sarah Harrison, City Centre Director, invites Niche readers to discover Leicester's new family-friendly trails. From centuries-old heritage and pioneering stories to interactive art, the city's walking trails offer a vibrant, free and captivating journey for visitors of all ages

STREET STORIES: INTERACTIVE ART LIGHTS UP THE CITY

Back by popular demand, Street Stories returns to Leicester, where it all began in 2019. This innovative art trail, created by BID Leicester and Leicester City Council, transforms vacant shop windows into vibrant interactive galleries featuring eight new artworks.

Local artists bring the city's spirit to life, so look out for Sam Grubb's playful animated characters adding sound and motion to Leicester's street art scene. Sam said: "WOW! This is seriously cool! I've never seen my work like this. I really love it. So cool seeing them brought to life. Seriously awesome work." Download the free 'My Leicester' app via bidleicester.co.uk/myleicesterapp. For more details, visit street-stories.co.uk.

STEP THROUGH TIME ON THE OLD TOWN TRAIL

For a deep dive into Leicester's 2,000-year history, the new Old Town Trail is essential. This heritage walk winds through the city's historic heart, showcasing architectural gems from Jewry Wall Museum to medieval and Tudor buildings.





Key highlights include the King Richard III Visitor Centre, Leicester Cathedral, where King Richard III's tomb lies, and the Guildhall, one of the oldest timber-framed halls in the country. As you explore narrow streets and bustling squares, you'll uncover stories of Leicester's evolution from ancient settlement to thriving modern city.

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY ON THE SUFFRAGETTES TRAIL

Leicester's progressive spirit shines on the Suffragettes Trail, which tells the inspiring story of Alice Hawkins. A local shoe worker and passionate activist, Alice played a vital role in the fight for women's voting rights. The trail marks significant sites tied to her life and activism, with plaques and artworks that highlight Leicester's role in this pivotal social movement. It's a powerful, family-friendly tribute to courage and change.

HERITAGE PANEL TRAIL: OVER 350 STORIES AROUND EVERY CORNER

Adding to Leicester's rich tapestry is the Heritage Panel Trail, featuring more than 350 panels spread throughout the city centre and neighbourhoods, celebrating stories of places and people of Leicester.



MORE TRAILS TO EXPLORE

■ **New Walk Trail:** Take a stroll with Romans, Georgians and dinosaurs along a leafy, elegant 18th-century promenade lined with historic buildings and cultural venues.

■ **Newarke Trail:** Costume drama played out in the city's ancient quarter, featuring museums and stunning architecture.

■ **King Richard III Trail:** From car park to cathedral – a king's journey that took 530 years.

■ **Old Town Restaurants Trail:** From converted factories to medieval houses, banking halls and an Assembly Room to traditional pubs, soak up the historic ambience as you enjoy fantastic food to satiate your appetite.

■ **Riverside Trails:** The riverside is connected by an extensive network of footpaths and cycleways – a great way to visit key attractions or just enjoy the area.

Leicester's city centre trails offer an exciting blend of history, art and stories that bring the city's streets to life. From interactive street art to centuries-old heritage and inspiring tales of change, there's something for everyone – free and fun for all the family, all just a walk away.

For further information:
VisitLeicester.info/see-and-do/trails

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Whether you're planning an unforgettable office party, a festive get-together with friends, or a cosy celebration with loved ones, we will provide the perfect setting. With live entertainment, delicious seasonal menus, exquisite drinks and showstopping décor, we will create a magical Christmas atmosphere from the moment you step through the door.

PRIVATE LUNCHES



If you're seeking a more intimate daytime celebration, both Winstanley House and The City Rooms are offering private Christmas lunch bookings, available for groups of 30–200 guests (400 guests at Winstanley House) on any day of the week. These lunches include:

- A glass of prosecco on arrival
- A fabulous three-course festive meal
- Tea, coffee and mince pies to finish
- Use of the PA system for background music
- Complimentary cloakroom (and parking at Winstanley House)

From just **£37.00** per person, these lunches promise delicious seasonal dining in a setting that exudes charm.

EXCLUSIVE PARTY NIGHTS

From beautifully dressed event spaces to exquisite seasonal menus and impeccable service, every detail is designed to create an experience your guests will treasure. Our dedicated events teams at both venues will work closely with you to craft a bespoke celebration – from tailored menus and drinks packages to entertainment that keeps spirits high well into the night. Available for exclusive hire throughout the festive season, our Christmas parties at Winstanley House and The City Rooms are as individual as the hosts who plan them. With limited dates available, early booking is essential to secure your perfect celebration!



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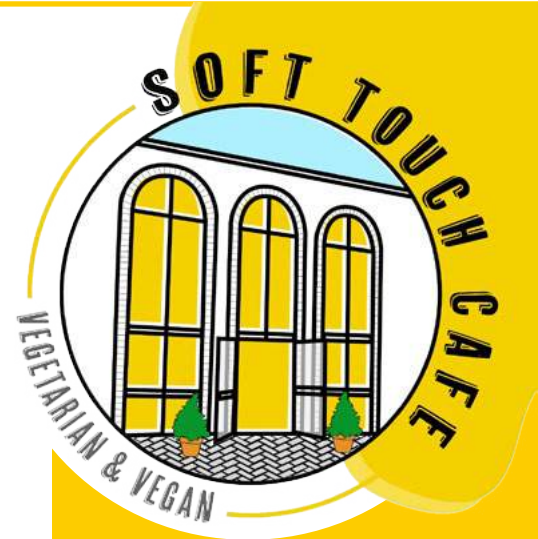


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Diwali 2025

A celebration of light, love and community

There's something truly magical about Diwali in Leicester. It's not just a date on the calendar, it's a feeling that wraps around the city, that brings people together in celebration, reflection and joy **Words by Emily Miller**

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, symbolises the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and good over evil. Known as the largest Diwali festival outside India, Leicester's event based on the Golden Mile becomes a beacon of light, colour, and community spirit.

But here in Leicester, it's also about togetherness, families, friends, and neighbours all sharing in a celebration that feels deeply personal yet wonderfully universal.

A GOLDEN MILE OF SPARKLE

From early October right through to November, Belgrave Road transforms into a glittering wonderland. With over 6,000 twinkling lights strung across the streets, the atmosphere is nothing short of enchanting. The much-loved Wheel of Light, towering at 35 metres, offers breathtaking views of the glowing Golden Mile below, it's a must for anyone wanting to soak in the full magic of the festival.

HIGHLIGHTS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Lights switch-on ceremony

Each year, the Diwali lights switch-on marks a proud moment for Leicester. As the Golden Mile illuminations flicker to life, there's a genuine buzz of anticipation and community pride. It's a moment that signals the start of the city's most cherished festival. This year it's on October 20.

Diwali Day on the Golden Mile

On Diwali Day, Belgrave Road becomes a pedestrian-friendly space, creating a relaxed environment where people can stroll, meet friends and enjoy the sights and sounds of the festival. While large-scale fireworks and stage shows are on hold this year for safety reasons, the heart of Diwali – the lights, the community, and the atmosphere – remains just as strong.

Street-level culture and festivities

Expect to find rangoli artwork, henna artists and stalls offering traditional sweets and crafts along the route. While 2025's event is scaled back, these smaller cultural touches offer visitors an authentic Diwali experience, celebrating tradition in simple, meaningful ways.





PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Arrive early With Belgrave Road closing to traffic from around 5pm, it's wise to arrive ahead of time and take in the build-up as daylight fades and the lights begin to shine.

Embrace the crowds Leicester's Diwali thrives on community participation. It's a lively, bustling event that brings people together, so expect a busy but friendly atmosphere.

5 ESSENTIAL DIWALI EXPERIENCES IN LEICESTER

1. The lights switch-on at Belgrave Road

The official start of the festival season. Watch as the Golden Mile's famous lights are switched on, signalling the beginning of Leicester's Diwali celebrations.

2. A ride on the Wheel of Light

The 35-metre Ferris wheel offers a great vantage point to take in the illuminated cityscape. It's a calm escape from the busy street below and provides a fresh perspective on the festivities.

3. Flavours of the Golden Mile

Sample authentic Indian snacks and sweets from the many eateries along Belgrave Road. Whether it's a plate of hot samosas or freshly made jalebis, the food is a highlight in its own right.

4. Traditional art & henna stalls

Spot street artists creating colourful rangoli patterns and stop by a henna stall for a traditional design. These cultural elements offer a tactile connection to the festival's roots.

5. Visiting a local Temple

Many Leicester temples, like Shri Sanatan Mandir, open their doors during Diwali, offering visitors a quiet space to reflect, learn, and experience the festival's deeper spiritual meaning.



Diwali in Leicester is a celebration of togetherness, culture and light. Whether you're experiencing it for the first time or returning for another year, Diwali 2025 will still offer a special atmosphere, rooted in tradition and community pride.



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10 QUESTIONS FOR...

NIALL MCNAMEE

Niall attended St Patrick's in Leicester before moving to De Lisle Catholic School in Loughborough. Now an acclaimed actor and singer-songwriter, his biggest film role to date is in the award-winning musical drama *Love Without Walls*, in which he not only starred, but also wrote and performed the entire soundtrack. Known for his raw, heartfelt songwriting, Niall blends folk storytelling with an indie edge

1 What's a funny memory from your childhood that still makes you smile?

My uncle Paul walking and subsequently falling (comically slowly) through some ice above the muckiest, shallow mini-lake. It must have only come to his knees, but he was covered in an orange, milky dirt. And from it I was nearly covered in my own wee from the laughter.

2 What's your biggest pet peeve?

Slow walkers — or rather, people who stop and change direction without thinking there could be anyone else walking nearby.

3 If you could have any superpower for a day, what would you choose and why?

Oh erm, I don't know! Maybe the ability to teleport, so I could skip the faff of travel and just pop anywhere in the world for a gig!

4 What's a guilty pleasure you just can't give up?

Classic *Coronation Street*. I'm on 2007 at the moment. God, that show used to genuinely be so good. To be fair, I feel little guilt.

5 Who's the most interesting person you've ever met?

That's a tough one. If it's interesting to everyone else that I've met them, it has to be Jackie Chan. But if it's the person I've met who I've found the most interesting, Matt Aubrey (Welsh actor).

6 What's the nicest compliment you've ever received?

A few people have told me my music has got them through some tough times. If that's all it ever does, I'd have to be happy about that.

7 What's a little lie you've told recently that you don't feel bad about?

I'm getting into a bad habit when someone asks me: "Have you heard of (insert band here)?" Instead of saying no, I just say yes. It's easier sometimes.

8 Where's your favourite place in Leicester, and why?

Bradgate Park probably. I used to hate going as a child, because what child likes going on walks? But it's got to be the nicest part of the county.

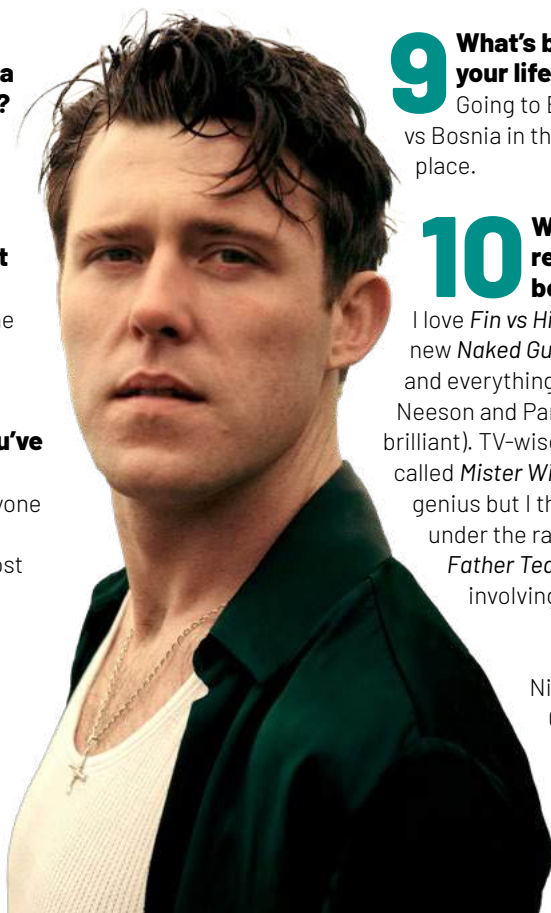
9 What's been the holiday of your lifetime so far?

Going to Bosnia to watch Ireland vs Bosnia in the Euro qualifiers. Crazy place.

10 What's your current recent TV show/film/book/podcast?

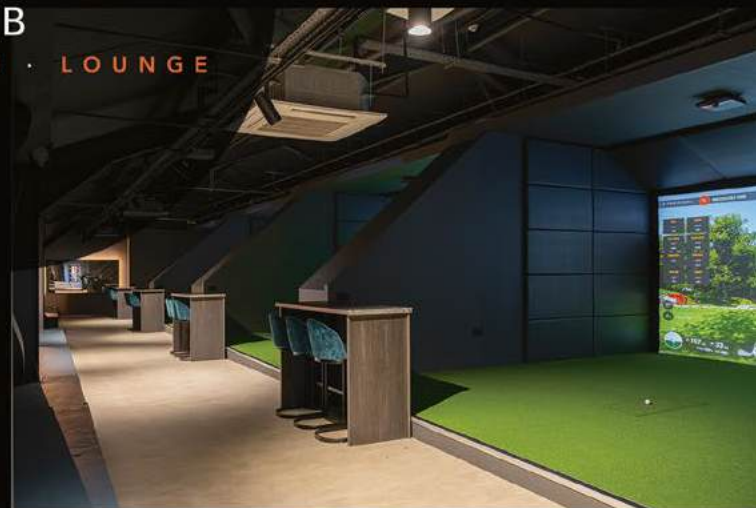
I love *Fin vs History* (podcast). The new *Naked Gun* movie was fantastic and everything I wanted it to be (Liam Neeson and Pamela Anderson were brilliant). TV-wise, there's a comedy series called *Mister Winner* which I think is genius but I think it has gone a little under the radar. I love classics like *Father Ted*, of course, and anything involving Alan Partridge.

Niall returns to Leicester on October 16 to headline at Duffy's, the first stop on his UK-wide tour.





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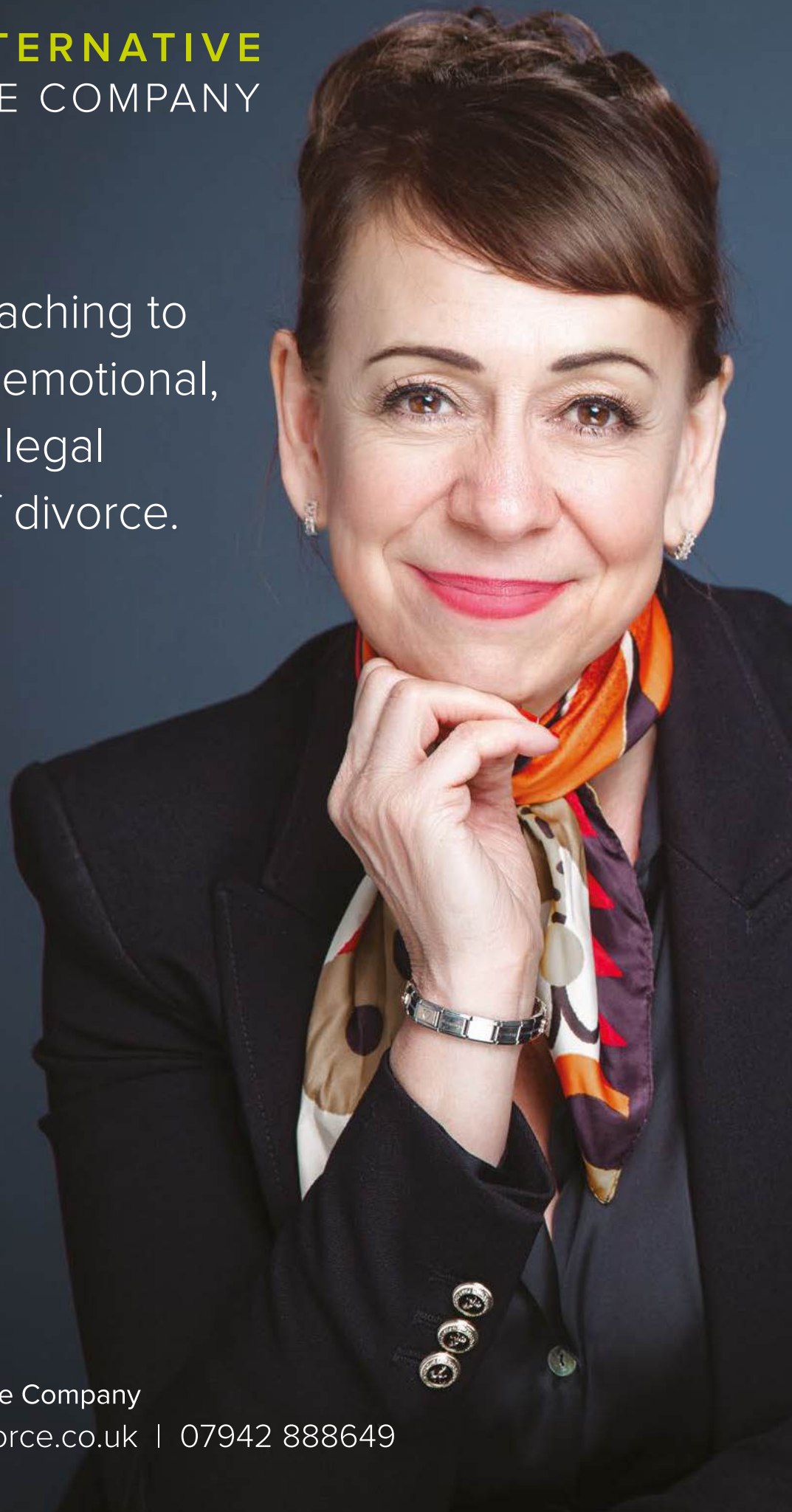
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