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Northumbria entrepreneurs receive funding to support the North East economy

Female graduate entrepreneurs from Northumbria University have been awarded a slice of funding worth up to £63,000 from a new accelerator programme set up to support successful start-ups.

Funding for the programme came from The Susan Dobson Memorial Fund, which recognises and supports women's entrepreneurial achievements in the North East, for the benefit of the regional economy. Students and graduates who have launched a business with help from Northumbria, were invited to

take part in the three-month programme, where they attended workshops, met other successful female entrepreneurs and received 1-1 mentoring to help them continue to grow their businesses.

At the end of this programme, eight entrepreneurs were awarded a share of the funding. These included Renee Fraser Shepherd, founder of Sloobie Skiwear, and Imogen Russell, founder of The Little Sleep Company

LR: Amelia Wright, Helena Hill, Emma Friel and Peter Storey

Case Study – Renee Fraser-Shepherd, Graduate from the Business and Enterprise Programme and her start-up business Sloobie Skiwear.

[Sloobie Skiwear](#) is a revolutionary fashion brand designed for women and the only skiwear on the market which uses Integrated Shapewear technology.

Renée’s designs have been created to be timeless fashion pieces, setting a clear boundary between fast fashion, and becoming a staple in women’s wardrobes which can be restyled year-on-year.

“Sloobie is committed to empowering women and increasing ethical standards, which is why all our imagery will show women as they are,” Renee said. “Unfiltered. We are honest and transparent about beauty and want women to feel confident in their skiwear. Which also means giving them more options to express themselves and be excited about their clothing, just as they would be when they’re picking outfits for a Summer holiday”.

Commenting on the funding received through The Susan Dobson Memorial Fund, Renee said: “This generous support has provided me with the necessary resources to execute an effective marketing strategy for this ski season. The support is invaluable in boosting awareness and driving conversions for Sloobie, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity.”

Sloobie Skiwear by Renee Fraser-Shepherd

Case Study – Imogen Russell, Psychology Graduate and her start-up business The Little Sleep Company.

The Little Sleep Company offers expert baby sleep support for parents & carers across the UK.

Imogen is a certified sleep consultant who works with new and expectant parents to help make a positive impact on families' wellbeing and happiness.

“I founded The Little Sleep Company during the 3rd year of my degree at Northumbria and things have very much grown from there,” Imogen said. “It has been a crazy journey, but one that has been really fulfilling. I have met some of the most fabulous people, partnered with brilliant businesses across the North East and even won a high-growth business award at the Sage! All whilst making some really great friends and having phenomenal support from the University Incubator along the way.”

Grateful for the funding she has been awarded, Imogen continued: “The funding I have received from The Susan Dobson Trust has been amazing in helping to develop our offering to the community. It has allowed me to invest in a new member of staff, as well as camera equipment to improve the production quality of our content. All of this has contributed to The Little Sleep Company closing a truly exciting contract with an international retail baby brand!”

The Little Sleep Company by Imogen Russell

The accelerator programme was developed thanks to a generous £63,000 grant from The Susan Dobson Memorial Fund. It will run over the next four years, with £15,000 being awarded to successful female founders each year.

'The Susan Dobson Memorial Fund was established in 2004, in memory of Susan Dobson who grew a thriving international business, starting out in the North East, having grown up in Newcastle.

Graham Baty, Head of Enterprise Development at Northumbria, said: “The accelerator programme with The Susan Dobson Memorial Fund is a great opportunity for our increasingly successful entrepreneurs. At Northumbria, we provide a range of services, including mentoring from industry experts to get start-ups to the point of trading - and we continue to support these businesses in the early years of trading. I'm excited to see how these businesses grow and the opportunities for other female founders in the

future.”

A full list of entrepreneurs to receive funding include:

Justine Carrion-Weiss – Founder of [The Blooming Platypus](#)

Amelia Wright – Founder of [Mila Clothing](#)

Ellie Burston – Founder of [Fizzical Dexterity](#)

Rosie Bath – Founder of [Cera Cotton](#)

Emma Friel – Founder of [Moodypidge](#)

Annabelle Hill – Founder of [Sea The Love](#)

Imogen Russell – Founder of [The Little Sleep Company](#)

Renee Fraser-Shepherd – Founder of [Sloobie Skiwear](#)

Northumbria is partnering with alumni, businesses, and other supporters to provide a range of financial initiatives, mental health and wellbeing services, and community-based projects, to make participation and progression in higher education more achievable for academically talented students, regardless of their social or economic circumstances.

To find out how your business can get involved, contact [Peter Storey](#).

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