

PRESS RELEASE

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Carrickfergus Photonics Company signs up to Equality Commission STEM Charter

The latest company to sign up to the Equality Commission's STEM Charter is YELO. YELO is an electronic test equipment manufacturer which operates out of a 25,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Carrickfergus. This is home to a team of 50, working in a range of STEM related roles such as mechanical design, electronic engineering, and software development.

By signing up to the Charter, YELO is committing to support gender diversity and equality and to increasing the participation and progression of women in its workplace.

Only 15% of people working in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) are women at present. Encouraging more women and girls to take up careers in STEM would help solve Northern Ireland's skills shortage and give women access to well-paid and rewarding careers.

Dr Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said: "We find it really encouraging that companies such as YELO are making this voluntary commitment to support and encourage women in their industry.

"Women with the right qualifications and experience can now enter careers which were previously male preserves. I know YELO is participating in WISE NI, launched in October 2020, which is important so that girls know at an early stage the full range of career paths open to them. Once women are working in STEM roles, support and encouragement are crucial to ensure they feel comfortable and able to carry out both their family and child-rearing responsibilities as well as their work responsibilities.

"I think that women will increasingly take up STEM careers when they see role models and we're delighted that YELO has provided us with the

excellent example of Judith Bell as one of our series of case studies involving women already working in STEM.”

Dr Collins went on to say that encouraging more women into such roles could have a positive impact on Northern Ireland’s future prosperity and growth.

“It’s vital that bright girls and women with an aptitude for STEM subjects are inspired to see careers in the sector as an attractive option,” she added, “and that’s why liaison with schools and colleges, including offering high quality internships as YELO does, is so important.”

YELO Chief Executive Officer Richard Furey said: “We have a number of women already working at YELO in various roles, such as mechanical design, software and manufacturing. We also regularly take university students on one-year placements and currently have two female students from Queen’s University and Ulster University undertaking engineering placements with us this year.

“Yelo is a family orientated business committed to supporting our staff so they can cover family commitments. We do this in various ways by offering flexible working and remote working as well as maternity/paternity leave. Each individual staff member has different circumstances so we always try to accommodate them as best we can.”

The Equality Commission STEM Charter initiative aims to raise the profile of women in industry, highlighting their successes and providing a forum for them to meet others in similar roles through events.

The last word goes to YELO’s Judith Bell, who is an electronic engineer working in the research and development department at Yelo. Judith says: “Becoming an engineer has encouraged my sense of curiosity and I am always driven to learn more. I have enjoyed being able to research the theory and to apply it in practice, in design, testing, repair and modification.

“There is such a diverse range of disciplines in engineering. I’d encourage anyone, regardless of gender, to get involved, especially creative folk, problem-solvers and those of us with a million and one questions about how the world works.”

For details on how your company can get involved go to:

www.equalityni.org/STEM