
Kerry Equine Academy gallops ahead

We talk to women who are forging innovative businesses in rural Ireland. Today, we talk to Phillippa Christie whose [Equine Academy](#) was created as a result of the challenges faced by Covid-19 restrictions.

Phillippa Christie's new equestrian business was driven by a need to connect when physical, face-to-face connection was effectively prohibited due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Christie, an equine psychologist and evidence-based trainer from Yorkshire in England, had been offering coaching and equine products through her existing business, Equine Partnership, in Killorglin, Co Kerry, when the pandemic prompted a new collaborative business that would allow her and her peers to continue to provide their services.

Recognising that her colleagues in the industry were as restricted from doing normal business as she was, Phillippa created the Equine Academy, which offers a range of online courses for equestrians who want to develop equestrian partnership.

Phillippa had previously worked as a web developer and in education, so she knew some of her colleagues would not be able to create their own platform and would not necessarily be used to creating online courses.

No horsing around

Her goal was to create a community of equestrian coaches, who would be able to provide their services, without having to pay to do so. The Equine Academy helps with course creation, provides marketing services, and hosts the course on its platform in exchange for a revenue split on bookings.

Phillippa says she found the structure of the ACORNS programme and the journey it took participants on was very well thought out. It enabled the participants to set and achieve goals and to question all aspects of their business model.

ACORNS is a Government-supported programme designed to support [early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland](#) through a peer learning approach.

Women in rural Ireland with new businesses or at least with well-developed ideas are being invited to join [ACORNS 7](#). The ACORNS programme is designed to support early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland through a peer learning approach. Thanks to the support of the

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the voluntary contribution of time by Lead Entrepreneurs, there is no charge for those selected to participate.

“When I started ACORNS, I didn’t really know what I needed, I just knew I needed support with my business and I needed a community. Through the ACORNS programme, I received all of that and more. This really is a business masterclass that every passionate and motivated entrepreneur should aim for,” says Phillippa.

“Since starting the programme, I have attained all of my goals and in almost half the time I thought it would take. Connecting with other entrepreneurs when you’re isolated in a rural part of the country is hard, especially through Covid. ACORNS managed the process online brilliantly. I really felt like I was in the room and I didn’t feel I missed out on anything, except for maybe a handshake and a hug.”

Phillippa says a key moment for the business was getting CPD recognition for Equine Academy courses from the Continuous Professional Development Service in the UK. It means that all courses offered are independently assessed.

In terms of the future, the Equine Academy will trial its first professional qualification in September 2021, and is in the process of creating a membership plan.

The call is now open for applicants for ACORNS 7 and 50 female entrepreneurs from across the country will be selected to participate. Anyone interested in receiving an application form ahead of the September 10, 2021 deadline for ACORNS 7 should [register their interest here](#)

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