

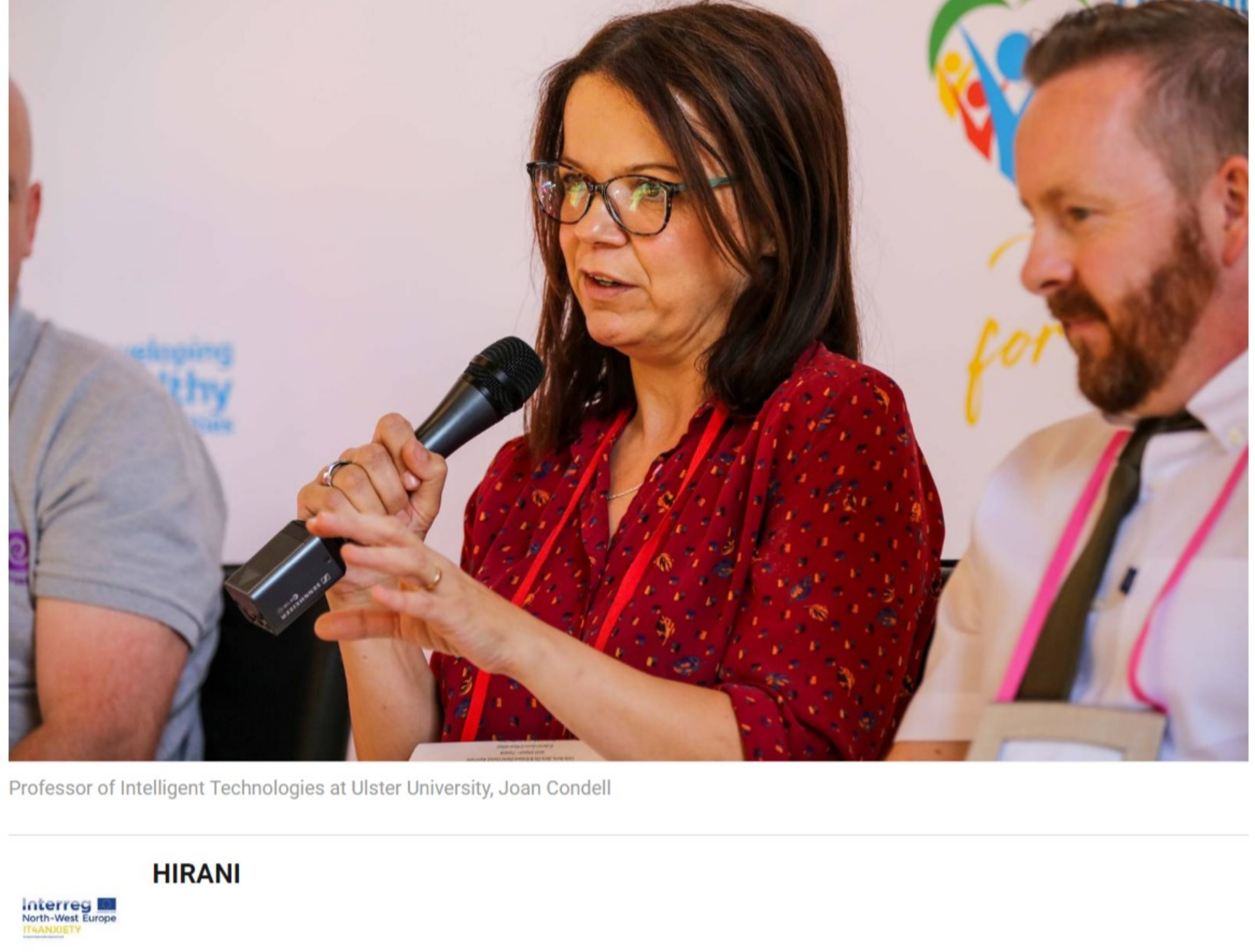


Advertising Feature 1

Inspiring excellence and innovation in Northern Ireland

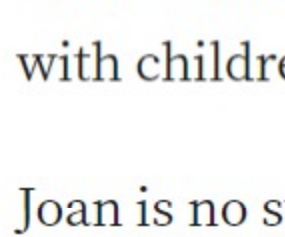
Creating partnerships to help patients with chronic conditions

Expand



Professor of Intelligent Technologies at Ulster University, Joan Condell

HIRANI



The health and life sciences sector in Northern Ireland is full of inspiring stories of partnerships to drive excellence and innovation to help patients manage chronic conditions.

None more so than Professor of Intelligent Technologies, Joan Condell, who is a mother of five, with children at all levels of schooling from primary to university.

Joan is no stranger to academic corridors having lectured at Magee College for over 20 years.

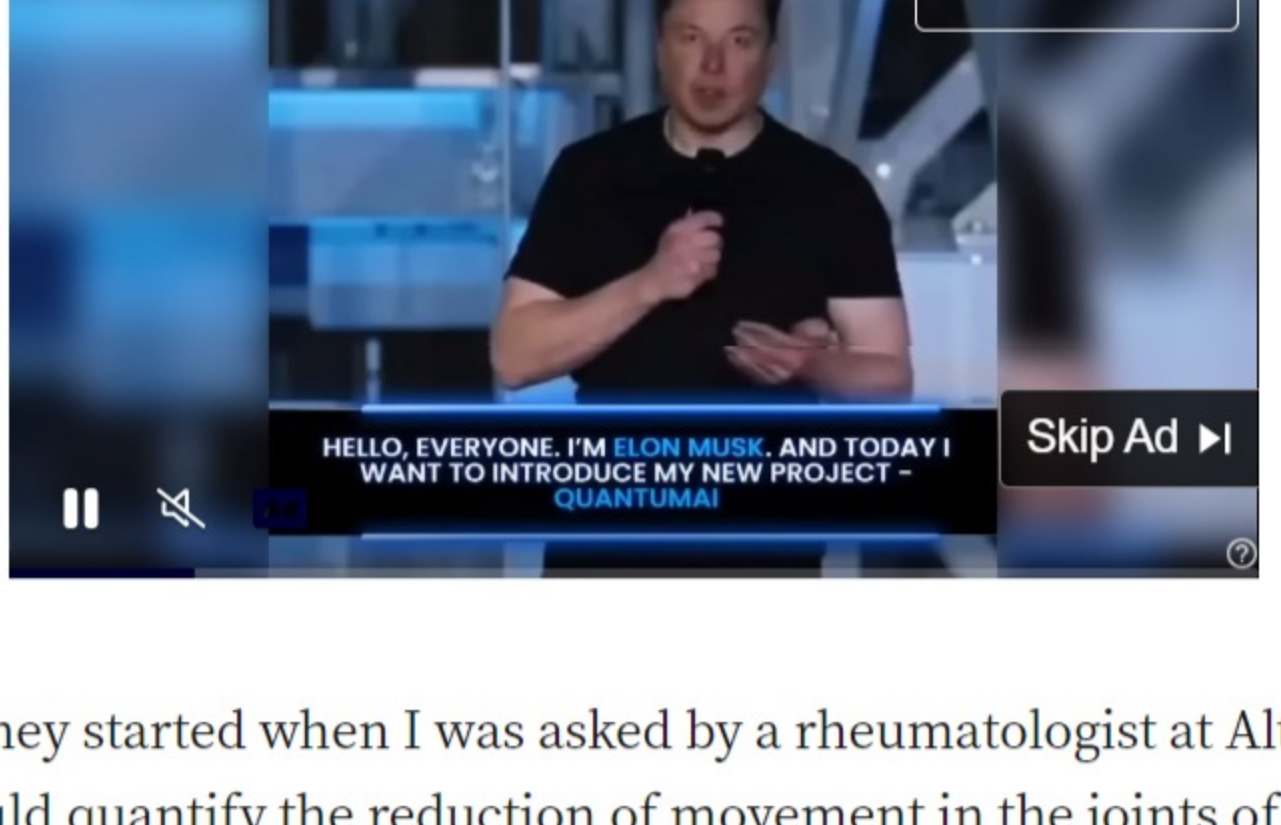
"After completing my undergraduate degree in Math, Statistics and Computing at Ulster University, I took off for Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde where I completed my MSc in Industrial Mathematics. It involved a lot of mini research projects and I realised, I really enjoy research!"

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Finishing her studies with a PhD in Motion Tracking in Images using Mathematical Techniques and while pregnant with her first child, Joan started lecturing at her alma mater and has been there ever since.

Although she may be based in the Northwest of NI, Joans reach and influence in technology is global.



"My commercial journey started when I was asked by a rheumatologist at Altnagelvin hospital to create a glove that could quantify the reduction of movement in the joints of the fingers of patients.

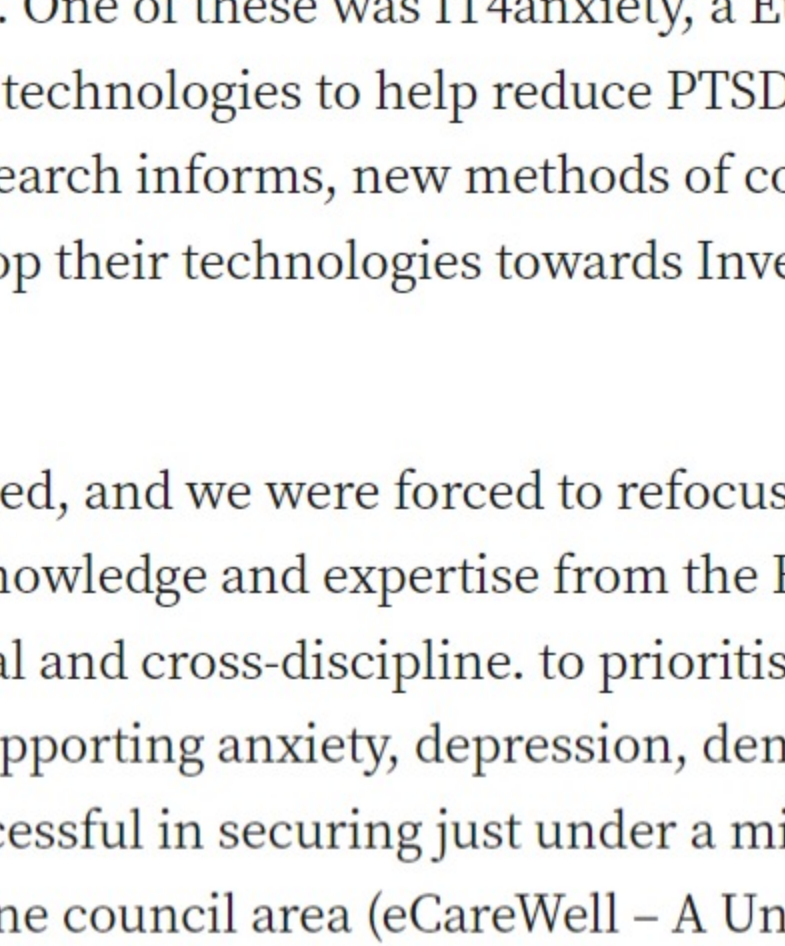
"I bought lots of gaming gloves, worked to adapt them and when that did not work, I created my own gloves in partnership with the Tyndall Institute (UCC) Cork. We moved to create our own technology at Ulster via a spinout company, so getting more involved in the commercial side of early-stage technologies."

At the same time Joans' reputation for excellence was growing and she was leading on several European projects.

Joan went on to create a European project called SENDoc which demonstrated and tested technologies for home monitoring in rural areas (SENDoc (interreg-npa.eu)). "We tested multiple technologies across the Northern Periphery and Arctic area; our small team included geriatricians from Sweden, physis from Finland, engineers in Tyndall Cork, and us as computer scientists based in Northern Ireland!

"We rolled this project out across Europe and as news spread, I was then invited to join other projects because of our success. One of these was IT4anxiety, a European North-West European programme, testing early-stage technologies to help reduce PTSD, depression, and anxiety remotely, in the home. Our Research informs, new methods of co-design and adaptations; supporting companies to develop their technologies towards Investment for a prototype to test with patients."

"Then Brexit and Covid happened, and we were forced to refocus our funding energies to benefit closer to home. I brought my knowledge and expertise from the European projects, which were cross-sector, multi-technological and cross-discipline, to prioritise health and wellbeing at home, considering technologies for supporting anxiety, depression, dementia. I brought this expertise back to NI and was quickly successful in securing just under a million pounds to set up a testbed, 'eCarewell,' in the Derry/Strabane council area (eCareWell – A University of Ulster study).



Working with 20 NI companies, local carers, researchers, the Health Innovation Research Alliance Northern Ireland and UKRI Digital Catapult, the eCarewell project aimed to put NI technologies into 170 NI carers homes in this council area.

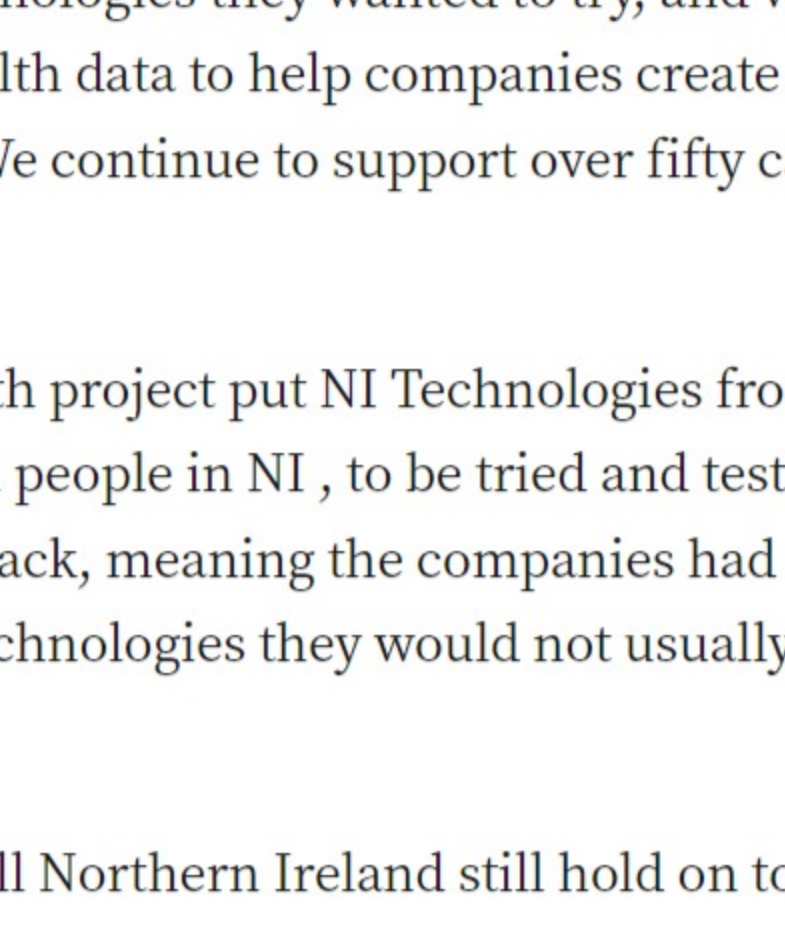
The project looked at how user-friendly, accurate, how acceptable the technologies were, and how they 'fitted-in' with patients and carers lives at home, to support their care and wellbeing.

"The carers could pick any technologies they wanted to try, and we gathered their user experiences, feedback, and health data to help companies create and test new technology that better meets their needs. We continue to support over fifty carers even though the project finished in late 2022."

The eCarewell health-and-wealth project put NI Technologies from local innovators into the hands of their neighbours - real people in NI , to be tried and tested in their homes , who then gave NI businesses direct feedback, meaning the companies had co-design partners and the carers, in turn, had access to technologies they would not usually have access to, supporting their mental and physical health.

So, what is next for Joan and will Northern Ireland still hold on to this influential trailblazer?

"I would like to rollout this vision for getting technologies made in NI to the people in NI. I want to work with NI and Irish companies and innovators along with community groups, charities, health organisations, local colleges and universities NI HLS cluster and centres of excellence like digital catapult to re-design and test within Northern Ireland – and then scale for global impact.



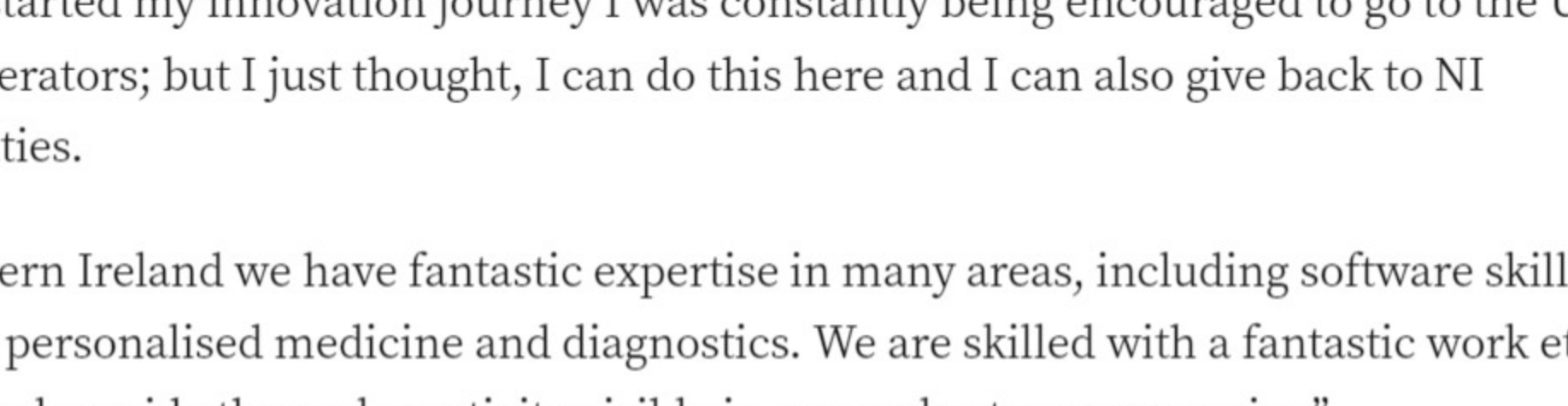
"When I started my innovation journey I was constantly being encouraged to go to the USA, to join accelerators; but I just thought, I can do this here and I can also give back to NI communities.

"In Northern Ireland we have fantastic expertise in many areas, including software skills, meditech, personalised medicine and diagnostics. We are skilled with a fantastic work ethic and resilience alongside the real creativity visible in our early-stage companies."

"We also have a great ecosystem. The Health Innovation Research Alliance NI (HIRANI) for example, have been a fantastic aid to me, as they have oversight of the full landscape of NI and without that I would not be able to come out of my silo and see what else is going on and where I fit into our NI health (and) technology sector."

Joann Rhodes, CEO of HIRANI said: "These projects show that we all have a part to play in innovation. Bringing people with diverse viewpoints and skills together to discuss needs, challenges and what is possible with technology and how this fits into the health and care pathway underpins the development of new medical technologies that can benefit patients, carers, health systems and our prosperity."

Read more on the NI health and life sciences ecosystem at www.hira-ni.com



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