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FORWARD LADIES ANNOUNCES THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS 2016 SHORTLIST

With a new female prime minister, eight women cabinet ministers, and a new female chair of the Institute of Directors, British politics and businesses are trailblazing for women in leadership.

And Forward Ladies has announced the shortlist for the 2016 National Women in Business Awards, sponsored by HSBC, which this year has attracted the highest number of entries ever received.

In announcing the results for the Midlands, Griselda Togobo, MD of Forward Ladies said: "This has been a fantastic year for women; we continue to start, grow and run high profile successful companies. We have been surprised and delighted by the number and calibre and diversity of the applications we have received, and look forward to celebrating their success.

"The award categories are a reflection not only of the types of businesses with which women are involved but also industries which need to attract and encourage young women to join for future growth and prosperity.

Debra White Regional Director of Small Businesses for HSBC and an award judge said: "There was an impressive number of high-calibre entries this year, highlighting the quality of talented businesswomen we have in the UK. These entrants are the future entrepreneurs of our country, with the Forward Ladies event to showcase the best Britain has to offer. HSBC will be supporting them every step of the way to ensure their businesses prosper and thrive in the long term."

Other judges included Ajaz Ahmed, the founder of Freeserve, Helen Samuels from United Utilities and Saha Hashemi, founder of Coffee Republic.

Now in its seventh year, the Awards have grown from being purely regional into one of the most prestigious events in the calendar for professional women. The organisation, founded in 1999, supports women in their professional lives and celebrates and champions the role of women in the workplace.

The shortlisted applicants (see below) in each of the categories will be invited to attend the regional final at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Birmingham on 28 September. The winners from this and the other regional finals, will then be invited to appear before a live judging interview panel in November, followed by the national final in Leeds on 1 December.

All shortlisted candidates will receive tailored business support from HSBC. Microsoft will also offer a full review of their ICT set up. The review will explore how their organisation can utilise technology across a range of business functions to drive business results.

Sharon Jandu, strategic partnerships, small and medium business at Microsoft said: "Our mission and values are all about helping businesses unlock their full potential and we are excited about the prospect of working with the UK's leading women in business and their companies, to support them to achieve this aim."

Working with The Institute of Directors to attract more women into the organisation, they will waive the £220 joining fee, leaving just the yearly membership fee to pay - all designed to support their finalists.

Lady Barbara Judge, chair of the IoD said: "It is my great pleasure to recognise the success of the women who have been shortlisted for The Forward Ladies' Women in Business Awards. As recognition of their accomplishments I would like to waive the election fee for any shortlisted businesswoman who qualifies for membership of the IoD. These are all women who the IoD would be delighted to have as our members".

Other national sponsors include Co-operative Insurance, with audio visual partner Saville's and drinks partner Perfect Cellar.

Shortlisted finalists for the Midlands are:

Digital category:

Diana Esho, MD, Easy Internet Services Ltd, Leicester, and Susan Hallam, MD of Hallam Internet, Nottingham.

Inspiring Leader category:

Jan Flawn, chair, PJ Care Ltd, Milton Keynes, Jan Steward, director, Ultrasound Direct, Market Harborough, Jillian Thomas, MD and founder of Future Life Wealth Management, Derbyshire, and Glynis Wright director and head of practice, Glynis Wright & Co Family Solicitors and Mediators, Leicester.

Not for Profit category:

Emma Hallam, founder and director of Alex's Wish of Rothley, Leicestershire, Maria Hanson, founder and MD, Maria Hanson Foundation, Derby, Emily Howlett, co-director, PAD Productions, Derby, Alison Thomas CEO of Equation, Nottingham and Karen Williams, founder of The Buddy Bag Foundation, Derbyshire.

Rising Star category:

Lisa Bacon, director and office manager, SHB Solicitors, Leicester, Henrietta Brealey, director of policy & strategic relationships, The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, Susan McEniff, director of marketing and fundraising, Charity Link, Leicester, Francesca Pearson, sales and marketing manager, Nottingham Conference Centre, and Dawn White, associate director at DBS Law, Nottingham.

SME Emerging category:

Rachel Carr, director, Business Checkmate, Hereford, Wendy Dean, MD, Strategi-hr, Stoke on Trent, Tracey Hudson, MD, HR Dept (South Warwickshire) Kenilworth, Mary Maguire & Sarah Stevenson, MDs, Astute Recruitment, Derby, Penny Pullan, director, Making Projects Work, Loughborough, and Shaherazad Umbreen, Shoes by Shaherazad, Birmingham.

SME Growth category:

Leanne Bonner-Cooke, CEO, Evolve, Leicester, Laura Cook, MD, The Learning Support Centre, Leicester, Jan Flawn, chair of PJ Care Ltd, Milton Keynes, Susan Hallam, MD of Hallam Internet, Nottingham, Fiona Hudson-Kelly, CEO, Smart Assessor, Street Ashton, Helen Johnson, managing

partner & solicitor advocate at Emery Johnson Astills, Leicester, Jan Steward, director, Ultrasound Direct, Market Harborough, Cheryl Thallon, MD, Viridian Nutrition, Daventry, and Glynis Wright director and head of practice, Glynis Wright & Co Family Solicitors and Mediators, Leicester.

Start-Up category:

Lorraine Boorman, chief executive, Optima UK Inc., Leicester, Clare Farrell, IFA, Northfield Wealth, Hinckley, Gemma Orton, MD, Mocha Marketing, Leicester and Karen Williams, founder, The Buddy Bag Foundation, Derbyshire.

Young category:

Lizzy Gaskin, director at The London Team Building Company in Norwich and Kim Leary, MD, Squibble, Birmingham

Ends

Forward Ladies was founded in 1999, having originally been set up through the regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward. Forward Ladies started with one clear goal: to unlock potential in professional women. Seventeen years on and we are still going strong! We wanted to create an environment and community where women could feel heard, seen and able to upskill and develop themselves. However, after a few years our membership exploded and it became clear that we needed to spend some time creating different offers for the diverse women in our membership. We have start-ups, career women, heads of large companies, successful small businesses and women on boards – all within our membership. Forward Ladies is the most diverse and inclusive network of its kind.

Now a national organisation with 14,500-strong (and growing) UK based professional women, we work with progressive companies wanting to retain and maximise the potential of their female talent

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