

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red top, is smiling and holding a red tambourine above her head. She is in the foreground, and the background is a blurred crowd of people at a social event, possibly a gala or party, with warm lighting and bokeh effects.

SUMMER MAGAZINE 2025

CO³

Chief Officers 3rd Sector

40th

ANNIVERSARY



FOREWORD

It's hard to believe how much has happened over the summer. As Chair of CO3, I've had the privilege of seeing first-hand the energy, creativity and resilience that our voluntary, community and social enterprise leaders bring to their work every day.

This summer felt like a milestone moment. We started the countdown to our Ruby Anniversary Gala marking 40 years of CO3 at our Annual Leadership Awards — an inspiring reminder of just how far our sector has come. Seeing leaders from across Northern Ireland come together to celebrate purpose-driven leadership was powerful. It was also a chance to look ahead, because leadership is never static; it's about continually learning, adapting and pushing for better outcomes for the people we serve.

Alongside the celebrations, the Northern Ireland Health Collective is already forging stronger connections with and between organisations working to improve health and wellbeing. Our new Leaders' Guide to Financial Resilience is helping members navigate a tougher funding landscape with confidence and creativity. And through our leadership programmes, international exchanges and policy forums, we're investing in the skills and networks that make our sector so influential.

We're doing all this against a challenging policy and practice backdrop. Pivotal's recent research on policy delivery in Northern Ireland shows how hard it can be to turn political promises into practical change. Silos, risk aversion and a focus on process over outcomes are real barriers. But it also shows why our sector is so important — we bring lived experience, cross-sector collaboration and a focus on impact. In short, we're a significant part of the solution.

As we move into the next six months, CO3 will stay focused on what matters: backing our leaders, sharing practical tools and strengthening our collective voice. Together we can help shape a policy environment that values evidence, supports innovation and puts people at the centre of everything we do.

Thank you to every member, partner and sponsor who's been part of this journey so far, it would be lovely to connect with you at our Ruby Fundraising Gala ball in November where we will celebrate the fact that Leadership is not just a title — it's a commitment, hopefully there won't be too much 1985 spandex and big hair but together we will celebrate the impact of our sector for now in the past and for the future.

Jacinta Linden
Chair of CO3

Be Part of CO3 by Joining Us Today!

A network of third sector leaders who inspire and support through building peer connections, skills development and advocacy

Are you a third sector chief officer, chairperson, trustee or senior manager?

Do you have an interest in the third sector?

Do you want to join a strategic network for you and your peers, which will help you to lead more effectively?

Would the company you work for like to connect with or help the not-for-profit sector as part of your Corporate Social Responsibility?

If your answer to any of these questions is 'yes' then join CO3 today!

A network of over 880 third sector leaders who inspire and support through building peer connections, skills development and advocacy. We have a rich heritage in leadership development spanning some of the largest charities and social enterprises through to medium and well-known third sector organisations.

JOIN HERE





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CO3 Leadership Awards 2025: Celebrating 40 Years of Leadership in the VCSE Sector

This year's CO3 Annual Leadership Awards held special significance as we marked our 40th Anniversary — four decades of championing leadership across Northern Ireland's voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector.

Kindly supported by our headline partner Evelyn Partners, the event was more than a celebration. It was a powerful reminder of why leadership matters, especially in times of extraordinary pressure.

We received over 120 nominations across a record-breaking 12 categories. From emerging leaders to trustees, from social enterprise champions to inspirational chief executives — each nominee told a story of leadership rooted in purpose.

As part of our Ruby Anniversary celebrations, we were honoured to welcome Katriona O'Sullivan as our special guest. An award-winning academic and advocate for educational equality, Katriona shared her compelling personal story — from growing up in poverty to becoming a respected voice for change.

This year, we also introduced new award categories to reflect the changing landscape of leadership, including a special focus on collaboration, innovation, and place-based impact. These additions reflect what we see every day in our members: leadership that is creative, connected, and committed to social justice.

Our thanks to every nominee, finalist, and supporter who made the 2025 Awards such a powerful evening. And to Evelyn Partners and all our sponsors — your belief in the sector enables us to continue recognising and investing in leadership.

As we step into the next decade of CO3, the message from this year's Awards is clear: leadership isn't a role. It's a commitment. And our sector is full of leaders worth celebrating.

**GO TO
GALLERY**



This year we are hosting our 40th Anniversary Fundraising Gala

The CO3 Ruby Anniversary Fundraising Gala Ball is a celebration of 40 years of leadership and impact in the Community and Voluntary sector. It's an opportunity to come together with fellow leaders to reflect on the journey so far, celebrate the achievements of the sector, and look forward to the future. The evening will include a formal black-tie dinner, dancing, and entertainment from special guests, including Neil Delamere. It's more than just a gala — it's a moment to recognise the strength of our community and the impact of CO3 over the last four decades.



40th ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISING GALA

4 Decades Empowering Leaders Driving Change



BOOK NOW

20 NOVEMBER 2025 - TITANIC BELFAST

The Northern Ireland Health Collective was launched

The Northern Ireland Health Collective (NIHC) is a coalition of VCSE organisations dedicated to improving health outcomes across Northern Ireland. A network of networks the NI Health Collective will represent the existing groups, networks and forums in the Health and Social Care field in NI, reducing duplication and ensuring impact. By uniting the voices of health, social care, and community wellbeing groups, we advocate for change, foster collaboration, and amplify the impact of our members



The NIHC's Focus



Advocacy

We champion the collective voice of VCSE organisations in the Northern Ireland Health Care System driving meaningful policy change.

[LEARN MORE →](#)



Education

We empower stakeholders with knowledge about the vital contributions of VCSE organisations.

[LEARN MORE →](#)



Collaboration

We connect organisations and foster partnerships that tackle health inequalities and improve outcomes.

[LEARN MORE →](#)

[LEARN MORE ABOUT NIHC](#)





Launch of the NI Health Collective

29 January 2025

Appointment of Gillian Lewis as Head of NI Health Collective

16 June 2025



Meeting with Minister Mike Nesbitt.

19 December 2025

First Advisory Panel Meeting

7 July 2025



First NIHC members event 'In Conversation with Mike Farrar' and introduction to Gillian Lewis as Head of the NI Health Collective

7 July 2025



We also launched the

CO3 Leaders' Guide to Financial Resilience

This is a tough time to lead a VCSE organisation in Northern Ireland. Government funding is under extreme pressure, European funding has fallen away post-Brexit and competition for funding is increasing exponentially.

In response, organisations are searching for new and sustainable sources of income to build their financial resilience.

This Guide is here to help. It is clear, jargon-free and experience-based, a practical guide to use as you explore your income generation options, helping you make informed choices about where best to invest. The Guide follows a clear logic, leading you from the key principles of successful income generation to a step-by-step guide to developing a diversified income generation strategy and writing your Case for Support.

Chapters on the principal income generation methods follow, each with a definition, an overview, critical factors for success and key steps to take. The Guide concludes with a comprehensive Resource Library, organised by income generation method, signposting you to a plethora of useful sources of information. We hope you find this Guide useful and it becomes a close companion on your journey to financial sustainability.

THE CO3 LEADERS' GUIDE TO FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

**Building Sustainability
Through Diversified Income**

**DOWNLOAD
THE GUIDE
HERE**



C03's Impact in 2024-25

This includes leadership development events, networking and connection events, policy events, governance training sessions, and member forums.

+880

MEMBERS

+80

TRAINING &
NETWORKING
EVENTS

+1900

TOTAL
DELEGATES
IMPACTED

+60%

ACTIVITY IS
FREE TO
MEMBERS



Launching the Advancing our Communities Programme



UU Leadership Programme 2025 Graduation



Supporting the Belfast MELA Festival 2025



Summer Influence Institute 2025





Session with Evelyn Partners on How to Manage Cash Deposits



The Role of the Company Secretary Training Session with Brendan Mullan



**Launching the Shared Island
Leadership Forum (CII and CO3)**



CO3 hosted a visit from 25 charity leaders from Ideell Arena in Sweden



Health & Safety Training Session with Joe Hanna



Interim Executive Training



Economic Update with the Bank of Ireland and Economist Alan Bridle



CO3 New to Post CEO Forum



Unleash the Power of Volunteers with Denise Hayward - Volunteer NOW



Financial Resilience Leadership Graduation 2025



New to Post CEO Forum

A forum designed to support CEOs new to their roles or to the organisation, provide peer learning and a supportive network of like-minded professional leaders in the Community & Voluntary Sector.

REGISTER NOW!

40th

CO3 GALA ANNIVERSARY

4 Decades Empowering Leaders Driving Change

A Fundraising Event

20 NOVEMBER 2025 - TITANIC BELFAST

BOOK NOW



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Our VISION

A fair and connected society with a vibrant, valued third sector, led by influential leaders, delivering outstanding impact.



Unity



**Social
Justice**



Integrity



Quality



Courage

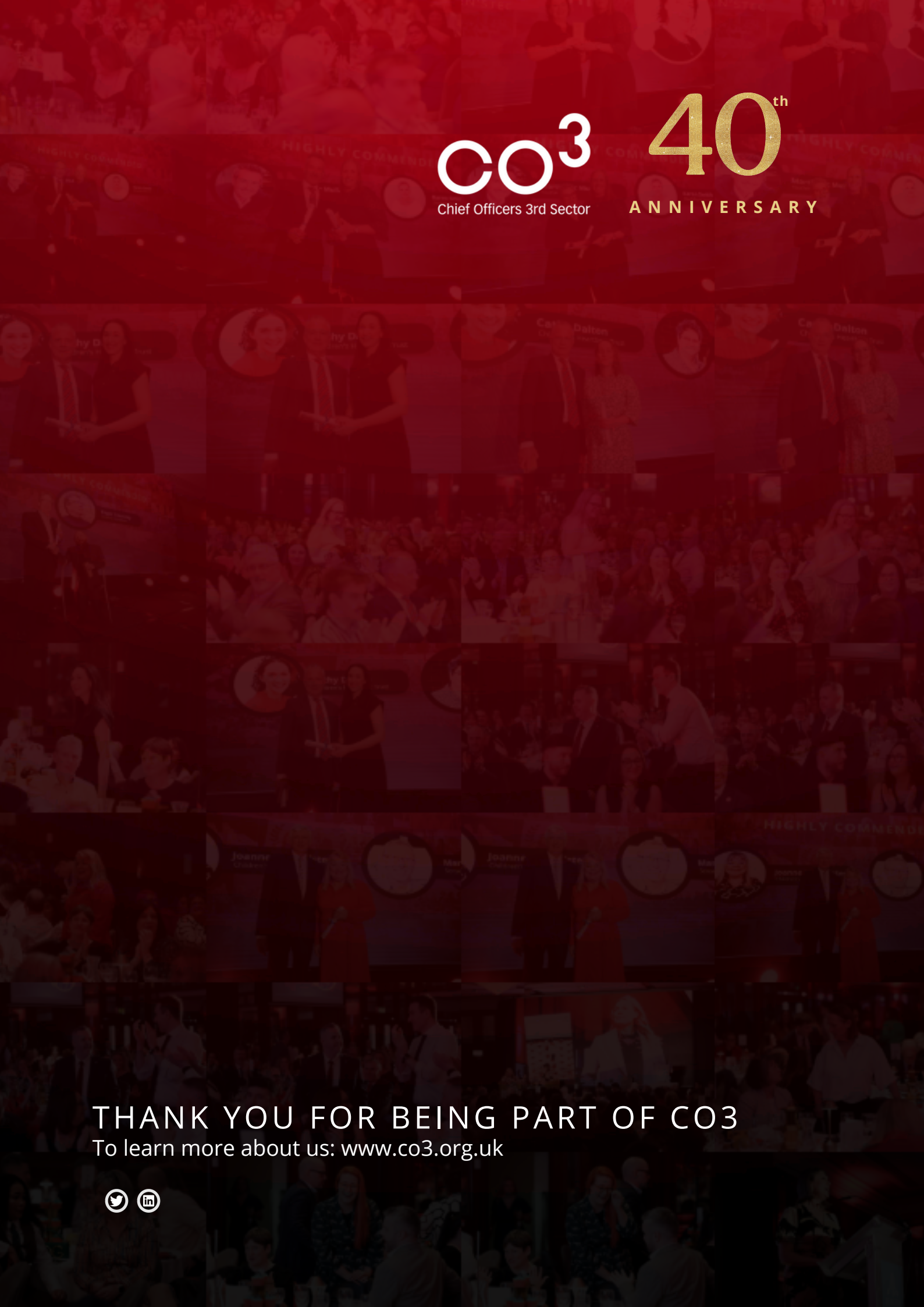


**Empowering
Leadership**



CO3 Chief Officers 3rd Sector

#EmpoweringLeadershipDrivingChange

The background of the entire page is a dense collage of numerous small, semi-transparent photographs. These photos depict various scenes from CO3 events, including groups of people at social gatherings, individuals receiving awards, and large crowds at conferences. The collage is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

co3

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40th

ANNIVERSARY

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF CO3

To learn more about us: www.co3.org.uk

