

# Edinburgh entrepreneur wins NatWest everywoman award

**Sara Hawkins of Edinburgh-based Projekt 42 was crowned the most inspirational and successful female founder of a social enterprise at this year's NatWest everywoman awards.**

The entrepreneur behind the not-for-profit gym and wellness centre in the city's Leith Walk, took home the Gaia Award at the glittering ceremony in London recently for creating a sustainable business model with a strong community benefit.

The 34-year-old set up Projekt 42 in 2017 following personal experience.

She said: "To win such an accolade is just incredible. I was a finalist alongside 20 other inspirational women from across the country in the running to win a NatWest everywoman Award and I'm over the moon to have brought the Gaia award back to Edinburgh."

Six years ago Sara was diagnosed with PTSD, unable to work and on long mental health waiting lists. Determined to improve her health, Sara self-funded a combination of fitness, counselling and life coaching sessions.

Having seen the difference it made, she was determined to help others and set up Projekt 42, having sold her home and donated the money to buy equipment.

With fitness classes ranging from yoga, pilates and boxing, a key component of its offering is its holistic approach to wellness. It now has the largest team of counsellors and

psychotherapists in the city outside the NHS.

She added: "Projekt 42 is a unique offering. It was the first wellness centre to combine fitness, yoga and mental health services.

"We recognise that many people out there need counselling support right now, but are stuck on waiting lists in the health system.

"With over 300 different classes each month to suit all ages and abilities, to our wellness services which include counselling and life coaching, we're committed to helping everyone. After all, mental health isn't something that some people have – we all have it in various degrees.

"I am looking forward to scaling Projekt42 and plan to open additional sites across the UK."

Speaking about the winners, Maxine Benson MBE, Co-Founder at everywoman commented: "Women in the UK do not lack ability or ambition, yet only one in three British entrepreneurs are female – a gender gap equivalent to 1.1 million missing businesses. Women are consistently less likely than men to believe they have the necessary skills to be successful entrepreneurs, which is why showcasing the success stories of winners is so critical. They demonstrate passion, determination and dedication often in the face of adversity.

"We congratulate this year's winners and applaud their incredible achievements."

