WISE is an independent social enterprise, with a mission to support gender balance in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, from the classroom to the boardroom.
We are a long, long way from gender balance – women make up just 21% of the core STEM workforce in the UK

What are your personal achievements and highlights at WISE?

Every year, we monitor the percentage of women in “core STEM”, i.e. physical sciences, engineering and technology. The good news is that numbers are steadily improving, but we are a long, long way from gender balance. Women make up just 21% of the core STEM workforce in the UK, and only 7% of women leave the UK education system with a core STEM qualification, compared to 24% of men. The explosion in data has created enormous demand for people with analytical skills, which is great news for anyone with scientific training, as there are so many exciting career choices available. Our corporate members actively want to attract and retain women in their business because they recognise that diverse teams produce better results.

What impact has WISE had so far?

We organise conferences and events to share fresh insights on gender parity in science, technology and engineering, from classroom to boardroom – connecting people to make a bigger difference.

What reception has the WISE campaign to increase the participation, contribution and success of women in STEM had?

WISE has substantial support with, like you mentioned, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal as a patron. What impact has this had on the success of WISE as an organisation? Do you think these types of supporters inspire other women into STEM?

We are privileged to have such an engaged and knowledgeable Royal Patron. Award winners tell us that being presented with a WISE Award by Her Royal Highness is the best moment of their life. Her impact and influence is felt at all levels, from her challenge to business leaders, to her inspiring speeches to students.

How do you ensure that WISE’s campaign is not negative towards men?

We work with men all the time because WISE is as likely as her brother to love physics, technology and engineering, from classroom to boardroom. These include:
• People Like Me is a revolutionary resource for teachers and STEM ambassadors to engage with girls aged 11 – 14.
• Launched earlier this year, the Apprentice Toolkit provides practical advice to employers, training providers and apprenticeship training associations who want to get more women onto their STEM apprenticeship programmes.
• The WISE Ten Steps is a CEO-led framework to create an inclusive culture for a woman using engineering or technology to improve patient care or treatment, because we can use their stories to inspire more girls to choose science.

Thought Leadership

To summarise what we do, we:
• Share insight and knowledge about the causes of and solutions to gender imbalance in STEM in the UK, from classroom to boardroom
• Collaborate with and connect WISE members (individuals and organisations) to be the leaders, role models and champions of gender balance in science, technology and engineering
• Amplify impact through inspirational events and campaigns

How has WISE developed from 1984 to today?

For example, how have attitudes and perceptions developed towards women in science from the 80s? The shortage of engineering talent in the UK is felt today more acutely than ever, coupled now with a digital skills shortage, affecting every sector. Today, we get interest in WISE from financial services, retail, travel, the media and others – it goes way beyond traditional engineering firms. The explosion in data has created enormous demand for people with analytical skills, which is great news for anyone with scientific training, as there are so many exciting career choices available. Our corporate members actively want to attract and retain women in their business because they recognise that diverse teams produce better results.

What has your personal experience been as a woman in a leading role?

I love it! My position at WISE opens doors to the highest echelons of business, industry and policy-making. I learn things every day from the wonderful people working in the team, the membership and the wider campaign. I would recommend it to anyone who cares passionately about making a difference.

What impact has WISE had so far?

Every year, we monitor the percentage of women in “core STEM”, i.e. physical sciences, engineering and technology. The good news is that numbers are steadily rising, but we are a long, long way from gender balance. Women make up just 21% of the core STEM workforce in the UK, and only 7% of women leave the UK education system with a core STEM qualification, compared to 24% of men. We will make a bigger impact through the power and influence of our growing corporate membership – these are the educators, professional institutions and employers who can make a difference to these numbers.

Can you tell us about the WISE projects?

WISE has products, events and resources to impact on gender balance in STEM from classroom to boardroom. These include:
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