

## Service Provider of the Year

At our 2017 NatWest Encouraging Women into Franchising (EWIF) awards, Vicki Mitman from OBirketts was the recipient our Service Provider of the Year award sponsored by The Franchise Show. Vicki's dedication and passion for franchising shone through in her entry, making her a worthy winner of this incredible award.

Our Service Provider of the Year award recognises the male or female service provider that has done the most to support, encourage and assist women into franchising throughout 2016.

Vicki is the previous winner of our Young Woman in Franchising of the Year, winning the award back in 2015, down to her dedication to both her clients and the franchising industry. Joining Birketts in May 2016, Vicki has helped to form and develop a franchise offering for the firm as they were completely unknown in franchising, with only one franchisor client prior to Vicki joining. Between the 1st June and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, with the help of Vicki, Birketts engaged 12 new franchisor clients and advised 18 franchisees across a number of different franchise brands.

"It was amazing to win the Service Provider of the Year award. Service Provider is a big category, covering all of those professionals who provide services to the franchise industry. I was particularly proud to win given the nature of the competition; I was joined by two excellent lawyers in the finals – both of whom are also EWIF regional chairs and inspiring women. Winning the award was a great achievement for me during my first year at a new firm. It recognises the hard work that I (and the Franchise Team at Birketts) have put into our franchise offering" explains Vicki.

Vicki has also been the EWIF East Regional Chair for over four years now, and has been able to enhance her role as this since joining Birketts. October 2016 saw Vicki host the largest Regional East meeting to date with 20 attendees. With four offices across East Anglia in Cambridge, Chelmsford, Ipswich and Norwich, Vicki feels she is now better placed to reach more prospective EWIF members by holding meetings in other parts of the region.

"It's great to see the changing demographic of the franchising industry over the last few years and I believe EWIF have certainly played a big role in that change. EWIF is a great organisation and one which I am proud to be a member and regional chair. I hope to continue growing personally and professionally in the world of franchising, and to carry on supporting women in the industry for the long term" Vicki adds.

"Winning this award has already been a hugely positive experience. Birketts is very keen to promote its franchise offering, and winning the award helps to demonstrate how far we have come in such a short time. I hope that I, and Birketts, will continue to flourish in the franchise industry" concludes Vicki.

EWIF's primary focus is to support women who are looking for a route into the franchise industry. Our remit is threefold; to encourage women to consider buying a franchise, to encourage business women to franchise their existing operations and to help franchisors attract more women to their networks. We are a not-for-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers, providing advice and guidance to anyone looking at trying to break into the franchise industry.