

Siobhan Gannon

The ImagiNation

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Siobhan Gannon founded The ImagiNation in Sligo in June 2025 after seeing an opportunity to create a dedicated role-play experience for young children in the town.

The ImagiNation is a screen-free children's role-play experience with 16 stations, including a play café, Garda station, construction area and theatre, where children can act out real-world situations in a safe, open-plan setting.

"I knew that my kids would love it. I knew I would have loved it as a kid," says Siobhan, a mother of three originally from Wembley in North West London. "I had seen similar role-play experiences in the UK and, during my research, found that there was one in Letterkenny and another in Galway, but none in Sligo. I thought it would catch on."

Siobhan admits that the enterprise is something of a departure for her after having previously worked in senior leadership HR roles in London and Hong Kong. Prior to her foray into imaginary play, she tested the idea through a Sligo mums' Facebook group and received more than 100 positive responses.

"I started the business with a pilot pop-up at the Clayton Hotel in Sligo. I quickly realised that setting up and packing down each weekend would be difficult to sustain. I was then approached by Henry Lyons & Co., the department store in the centre of town, and it has become a stable base. It also has good visibility and excellent footfall," she says.

Siobhan is now focused on building the business sustainably, increasing midweek visits, developing preschool, crèche, school and library partnerships, and exploring products such as play kits and play prompt cards.

ACORNS arrived at the right time for the development of the business. "It can be so isolating running your own business. Having that community and people to bounce ideas off helped hugely," adds Siobhan.

Providing early stage female entrepreneurs, living in rural Ireland, with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their current aspirations.



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