

International Women's Day 2025 'Accelerate Action'

The theme for International Women's Day (IWD) 2025 is #AccelerateAction. IWD says that "Focusing on the need to Accelerate Action emphasizes the importance of taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality. It calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres."

When thinking of the best way to align with this theme, WMSoc decided to highlight the stories of some women within the industry via two different avenues. The first was with the webinar we hosted on 7th March, *Why Work with Water* (an in-depth write up of which can be found on page 56), which was a round table discussion of women in the industry. Conversation focused on the best ways to relate to younger women who are interested in the industry, as well as the career journeys of each speaker. The second way we are following the theme is by showcasing some of our female member's stories in Waterline.

For the third year running, we have included short biographies of some of our female members in Waterline. We believe that this accelerates action for many reasons, with the main one being visibility of diverse voices within our industry. We believe that it is important to share stories from all backgrounds so that people from the next generation can understand that there is a place for everyone in every industry.

Here are the stories of some of our female members:



Emma Jorgenson,
Compliance
Manager at Believe
Housing

From a young age I was always very interested

in science, especially biology, and this passion led me to study Biological Sciences at university where I gained

my degree. Following university, I started my career in microbiological testing labs, firstly for a biocides manufacturer and then in the clean water testing laboratories at Northumbrian Water.

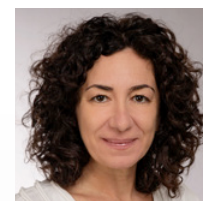
Although I enjoyed working in laboratories, I was always interested in what happened after the results we provided were received, so when the role of Legionella Manager at Sunderland City Council was advertised, I knew that this was the direction I wanted to go in. During my 10 years in this role, I was responsible for legionella control over a diverse portfolio of around 300 buildings, including schools, offices, and sports facilities. I then got the opportunity to join Believe Housing, firstly working as a Compliance Officer with responsibility for water hygiene, and now as Compliance Manager overseeing legionella, asbestos, fire, lifts and radon compliance in over 18,000 properties.

During the early part of my time at Sunderland Council I started to regularly meet with other individuals managing legionella within councils across the North East to share best practice and ideas. This group became the North East Council Legionella Focus Group (NECLFG) which I was lucky enough to chair from 2018 to 2020. Following this I became part of the Water Management Society Committee where I was also given the opportunity to chair the events committee. Last year I was honoured to be awarded the Association of Safety and Compliance Professionals "Woman in Compliance" Award for my work at Believe Housing.

During my career I have met, and been mentored by, some amazing people. I first met Ian Kershaw when I joined Sunderland Council and from that point onwards, he took me under his wing and has always been so supportive and generous with his time. He opened up opportunities within the industry for me which led me to chair the NECLFG, join the Water Management Society Committee and speak at

various events for WMSoc and the LCA. I am lucky that in my current role I am surrounded by amazing people including a strong female leadership team, from my colleagues in the Strategic Assets senior management team to my Assistant Director, Director, and Executive Director. We are in a privilege position where we can inspire the young ladies coming into our organisation and show them that there are no barriers to what they want to achieve in their career.

I would encourage any women considering starting a career in the water industry to go for it! There is such a breadth of varied roles within the industry, so there is something for absolutely everyone. My current role is very diverse and often challenging however it is incredibly rewarding to play a part in ensuring that our customers can live safely in their homes.



Dr Vicky Katsemi,
Water Hygiene and
Infection Control
Consultant at
Trinkwasserhygiene
After completing my Biochemistry

studies with a focus on Microbiology and Genetics, followed by a PhD at J.W. Goethe-University in Frankfurt, I spent two years as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Hellenic Pasteur Institute in Athens. My transition to industry led me to work in Biotech across Germany and the Middle East. In 2008, I moved into the field of water hygiene, managing water filtration solutions for healthcare and non-healthcare applications for an American Corporation. Over time, my role expanded across Europe, EMEA, and Asia Pacific.

To deepen my expertise in Infection Control, I completed a specialization in Infection Prevention and Control at the German Society for General Hygiene and Hospital Hygiene (DGKH) in 2022 in form of a Sabbatical. This provided valuable new perspectives and reinforced my commitment to bridging



the gap between Microbiology, Hygiene, and Infection Control.

Since then, I have been working independently as a Water Hygiene and Infection Control Consultant within Europe. My focus is on raising awareness about waterborne infections, their prevention, and supporting clinical and non-clinical institutions in ensuring continuously safe, compliant, and sustainable water systems.

"It is all about water," I often say. Our cells, our organism, and our planet consist largely of water. This unique molecule is essential for life, yet it can also be chemically or microbiologically contaminated, posing serious health risks. Nevertheless, many people still assume that tap and shower water in developed countries is inherently safe, some even believe it to be "sterile" or "100% pure." In my discussions with hospitals worldwide, I often encountered the same response: water-associated infections were not a concern — despite the absence of systematic water testing or surveillance for healthcare-associated infections (HAIs).

Water hygiene is a complex, often underestimated field. While quick fixes are tempting, sustainable solutions require a combination of risk assessments, evidence-based prevention strategies, and interdisciplinary expertise. Understanding how microorganisms live and behave is crucial for their effective management. As integral components of our environment with special features and capabilities, they require knowledge-driven control.

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working with leading experts in water hygiene and infection control. Their dedication to guidelines development, professional education and awareness building effort continues to inspire me. Hygiene and particularly water hygiene, is fundamental to Public Health. Accurate knowledge translates into infection risk minimization and better health protection.



Rana Nazir,
Account Manager
at Total Water
Compliance

Water is more than just a resource - it is life. Yet, ensuring

its safety and sustainability requires technical expertise, dedication, and a culture that values innovation and inclusivity. My journey in the water industry spans over 25 years, shaped by incredible mentors, dynamic experiences, and a deep-rooted commitment to making a difference. I have dedicated my career to ensuring safe, compliant water systems while supporting clients in meeting regulatory standards.

My entry into the water industry was unplanned, but it quickly became a calling. Starting at major companies, I gained firsthand experience in water treatment, compliance, and the critical role they play in public health. Every challenge became an opportunity for growth, and I was fortunate to work with some of the best minds in the industry.

I owe much of my success to the extraordinary people who have guided me - family, friends, colleagues, and industry leaders. Their mentorship and belief in my abilities instilled confidence and resilience, shaping my leadership approach. To them, I extend my deepest gratitude. Their influence remains the foundation of my career.

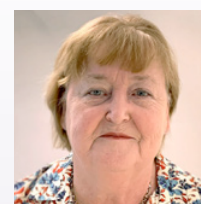
Today, I am proud to be part of Total Water Compliance (TWC), a company that is redefining industry standards, and every individual - regardless of background or gender - is given the opportunity to excel.

One of the most remarkable aspects of TWC is its commitment to breaking barriers, particularly in increasing female representation in engineering roles. The women in our company are driving change, proving that skill, passion, and determination transcend outdated norms. Together, alongside our equally talented male colleagues, we are shaping a new era in the water industry.

I strongly believe career progression should be based on talent, effort, and commitment, rather than background or gender. My journey has shown that with the right support, mentorship, and work ethic, anyone can succeed and lead. Organisations must lead from the top, encouraging young professionals to take on challenges and expand their expertise. Providing a collaborative and inclusive environment where employees feel empowered to grow. Ensuring their leadership recognises and nurtures talent, allowing individuals to progress in their careers.

I feel truly blessed and am grateful for the support I received along my journey, which played a key role in my achievements, such as winning the Future Faces Award, Peace Award and being a finalist for the National Diversity Award. As a winner of many awards and accolades, these experiences have strengthened my commitment to empowering others to reach their full potential.

My journey has been one of growth, leadership, and unwavering purpose. As I continue to champion excellence, I remain dedicated to empowering those around me. Water is life, and through our work, we are shaping a safer, stronger, and more inclusive future - together.



Dr Susanne
Surman-Lee,
Director of
Leegionella Ltd

I first got hooked on microbiology when I took out

a book on parasitic tropical diseases from the school library when I was 11. I was fascinated by pictures of someone removing a guinea worm emerging from their leg by wrapping it around a stick and pulling it, caused by drinking contaminated water. I remember being horrified that it could take days, or sometimes weeks, to remove the whole worm! I left school and started work in 1970 in the pathology laboratories at the Manchester Royal Infirmary as a Trainee Technician, rotating around different specialities including haematology, cytology,

and microbiology. It was really good training, and instilled a love of microscopy; which proved useful when I started my PhD twenty years later.

I then began working in the Public Health Laboratory (PHLS) in Preston in 1972, spending most of my time working in satellite clinical microbiology where we carried out routine microbiology, some research, and *Brucella* typing. Working with very dedicated Clinical Scientists was my inspiration to later become a Clinical Scientist in the PHLS.

I took a career gap when my children were born. My son was born at less than 28 weeks and acquired a *P. aeruginosa* venous catheter site infection and bacteraemia during his time in NICU. It was touch and go for a time, and that is why I am now so passionate about the safety of healthcare water systems. When my children went to school, I started studying at what was then Lancashire Polytechnic, for a joint degree in Biochemistry and Physiology. Following graduation, I applied for a clinical scientist post in microbiology at Hope Hospital in Salford where I worked with medical staff on some interesting research projects and supported the routine clinical lab at times. The job was meant to include the opportunity to study for a PhD, but the travel time and two young children made it impossible. As luck would have it, I was asked if I would like to go back to Lancashire Polytechnic to run the Radiobiology lab with an agreement that I could do my PhD in Microbiology.

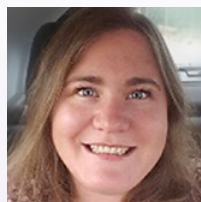
After this, I ran into Prof Eric Bolton who I had worked with at the PHLS, and I told him that I was looking for a project that crossed over both environmental and medical microbiology. He organised for me to visit PHLS colleagues in Porton Down working on legionellae. As result, I wrote a research proposal to SERC for a personal award for investigating legionella growth within biofilms and was delighted when it was fully awarded.

Following my PhD graduation in 1994,

I worked on a short research project as a Clinical Scientist with Preston PHLS on *Campylobacters* in sand on bathing beaches, and later that year became a senior Clinical Scientist the PHLS Water and Environmental Research Unit at QMC in Nottingham. I worked on several collaborative water related research projects, taught medical students, supported national and international outbreak investigations and the development of the *Legionella* EQA. This gave me the skills and confidence to apply for the Unit Head at PHLS headquarters in 1998 to run the London Food, Water, and Environmental Laboratory Service. I initiated the London Wide Water Group which led to the development of a collaborative approach to cooling tower inspections and investigations. When I retired on health grounds in 2010 as the Director of the lab, we were providing routine and outbreak support to the authorities in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Buckinghamshire as well as the East region.

My husband decided to retire the same year and we set up our consultancy, Leegionella Ltd, initially intending for it to be part time, but we are still working as hard as ever!

It hasn't been an easy journey, but I wouldn't change it. I think if you really want something, you can make it happen.



Holly Waterman,
Legionella
Consultant at Tetra
Consulting

My life has always revolved around water,

my surname is Waterman, I have a Portuguese Water Dog, I am a Scorpio (water sign), I'm a qualified Scuba diver and boat handler, I'm an avid tropical fish keeper, I am a sea angler, I attended the University of Portsmouth, I have an undergraduate degree in Marine Biology, and a Master's Degree in Coastal and Marine Resource Management. I've always been fascinated by water, and one of my favourite places is the beach. My nickname at Uni and my Xbox

Gamertag was also Shark_Girl because of my obsession with sharks!

I didn't plan on joining the Water Industry, I kind of fell into it. I moved back from Uni and was overqualified for everything I applied for and then ended up with 4 part time jobs (Academic note taker, Croupier dealing Blackjack, Tutor tutoring English, Maths, and Science, and a night controller at a cab company). I managed to do this for over 2 years but 70 hours a week just wasn't sustainable. I wanted a job I could sink my teeth into and make a career out of. I applied as a Water Treatment Technician where I learned how to do everything related to domestic and closed water systems, including all monitoring and maintenance tasks.

I did, after a while, however, start to get bored of showerhead descaling and flushing. I felt like I wasn't using my brain or using my logical and analytical science background. I asked if I could train as a Legionella Risk Assessor, to me, it seemed like a perfect move, one where I could use my background to solve issues and improve compliance. On one of my very first solo assessments, I found the source of Legionella in a building that had had an issue for over 7 years, this inspired me to join the Consultancy division of the company I was working for and do assessing full time.

Since then, I have moved to a company where I focus on the specialised risk assessments which are my favourite; cooling towers and spa pools, these are also, arguably, the most difficult. The training provided by the Water Management Society and the webinars available have helped continue my learning and enabled me to become a practical assessor, improving compliance on every site I attend through increased knowledge and experience. One hurdle I have had to overcome since joining the Water Industry, is that women are in the minority, and sexism on site is still quite common. I'm proud to be in the minority and strive to be good at my job and have extensive knowledge, so that no one can doubt my ability, just because I'm a woman in a man's world.