

# CPA Profile

## Áine Collins



**Title:**  
Business Development  
Director

**Company:**  
EFM Ireland

**Qualifications:**  
CPA. IOD

### Why did you decide to start out on a career in accountancy?

I discovered the value of work and reward from a young age while selling cabbage at local markets in Cork with my Dad. The incentive was you had to pick the cabbage for the day, and I could keep any money I made.

Following this, I got my first office job aged 19, as a legal cashier at Bolton & Lowe, a law firm at Temple Bar in London.

I loved the work, I really enjoyed working with numbers and this provided me with the impetus to study accountancy, later qualifying as a CPA. I believe lessons learned in your first job can lay the foundations for the rest of your career – and this job certainly fuelled my passion to enter the world of finance and working in the world of business.

### Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

I worked in a CPA practice in my final year to get more experience with a growing firm. I have found CPA Ireland to be incredibly helpful with my career over the years as well as very flexible and holistic in their approach.

### Please provide a brief history of your career.

Shortly after qualifying as an accountant in 1996 I opened an Accountancy Practice in Millstreet, Co Cork. I spent the following nine years growing the practice and I really enjoyed helping my clients manage and grow their businesses.

In 2005 I joined the SWS Group which was a multi sectoral business in the areas of Forestry, Renewal Energy and Corporate Services. They were growing their corporate services operation, acquiring accountancy practices at the

time and worked on transformation and growth within corporate services function.

As my working life continued, so did my passion for politics. In 2011 I was elected to Dáil Eireann as a Fine Gael TD for Cork North West. I went on to represent my constituency for 5 years. During that time I lead the policy for equalisation of the taxation and PRSI system between the self-employed and employees as it had been unequal for years. I also worked to deliver the approval of payment of the Kalydeco drug for people who live with Cystic Fibrosis as well as making over 5000 representation from constituents during that time on various issues from business concerns, education issues, medical cards, social welfare, housing, etc.

From 2016 to 2019, I worked on a project with UCC as well as setting up my own business Blueprint Consulting – advising on business finance and strategy.

In 2017/2018, I returned to study and completed a Diploma with the Institute of Directors. Earlier this year I was appointed as Business Development Director with EFM Ireland who provide strategic financial and advisory services to Irish Businesses.

We have a team of highly experienced Finance Directors who are available to offer operational finance and strategic support on a flexible, part-time basis, which offers the benefit of having that expert input, without bearing the full-time cost of hiring a Finance Director in-house. We work with businesses from the ground - up, to support with growth, development and to effectively and efficiently scale-up their business.

This role really resonates with me following my long career of working with Irish Business and understanding

the challenges that businesses face every day.

### What has been your biggest career achievement?

Serving as TD for Cork North West.

I found being a member of Dáil Eireann an exceptionally fulfilling role, where I helped make a difference on issues that were of major importance and that had direct effect on our countries policy making and governance. Being a CPA accountant and former business owner, my knowledge base contributed significantly to my work as a TD.

On a personal bases my greatest achievement is being a mom to 3 children; one who is now an adult living in Toronto and 2 who are still in National school and of course a supportive husband in all that I do.

### What do you think are the most pressing issues for accountants?

Like many careers today, there is a lot of disruptive technologies in the world of Accountancy & Finance. As a result, accountants now have to adapt to more of a role in business planning, financial and strategic advisory services. As humans, we must become tech fluent and augment artificial intelligence with human skills that cannot be digitised e.g. analysis, scepticism and creativity.

### What traits do you admire most in others?

Honesty, Fairness, Courage, Openness, Resilience and Loyalty .

### How do you unwind?

I relax by taking time out to enjoy activities such as current affairs, hiking particularly in the Kerry Mountains, going to the gym, meditation (trying!) cooking and spending time with family and close friends.