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UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

Lunar New Year celebrations

Page 3

Picture: John Hopkins



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Editor's Opinion

THE ongoing financial issues at Warrington town hall seem to be coming to a head with the forthcoming budget, with cuts left, right and centre.

At time of writing, much of what is proposed in the budget is dependant on whether the borough council will get additional financial support from the Government.

Permission has already been given to increase council tax by up to 7.5 per cent, but this will only scratch the black hole in the £130m funding gap over the next four years.

While council tax is probably increasing by 7.5pc along with the controlling Labour group councillors also voting to increase their allowances, our services are going to be reduced and jobs are going to go.

The council has been warned for

many years about risky investments to plug funding shortfalls.

Instead of cutting their cloth accordingly, the council has gambled and sadly failed in a big way – and no one has been found liable and no apology been given.

Meanwhile the Government envoys, sent in to balance the books, appear to be taking no prisoners as they prepare to sell-off Birchwood Park and Redwood Bank, while also reviewing Times Square.

With other proposed cut backs including the likes of a creche at Orford Park Jubilee Hub, to save just £33k a year, prepare for lots more cut backs!

Tough times are ahead, so fasten



your seat belts for the roller coaster journey ahead!

To finish on a positive note Warrington Wolves kicked off the new season in front of a record-breaking sell-out crowd of over 15,000 against St Helens at the Halliwell Jones Stadium and produced a thrilling 24-14 victory.

As the club celebrates 150 years and I celebrate 50 years of following the Wire, we need it to be "Our Year" more than ever to give Warrington something to shout about!

And yes, I do know I appeared on the Sky Sports TV screens more than Luke Littler on the night!!

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Town's first-ever Lunar New Year celebrations

WARRINGTON Hongkongers CIC (WHKERS CIC), in proud partnership with Warrington BID, celebrated the first Warrington Lunar New Year Market 2026.

This landmark event, celebrating the Year of the Horse, marked the first-ever Lunar New Year celebration in the town, curated and organised by the local Hong Kong community.

Centred around the theme of "Cultural Fusion," the event bridged communities through a shared appreciation of authentic traditions, festive gastronomy, and interactive entertainment.

Warrington South MP Sarah Hall was on hand to join in the fun and said: "A huge thank you to Warrington Hongkongers CIC and Warrington Business Improvement District for organising a fantastic day sharing culture and

celebration.

"It was such a joy to see our town centre filled with colour, music, food and community spirit as we welcomed the Year of the Horse together.

"The horse symbolises action, resilience and forward motion and that feels fitting for Warrington. We are a town that keeps moving. We look after one another. We build, we grow, we adapt."

Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols, who was also in attendance at the event added: "The traditionally British spring downpour didn't put a dampener on celebrations organised by Warrington Hongkongers, which it was lovely to join with friends and to experience some fantastic food, music, games and culture to mark the Lunar New Year at Warrington Market.

"It was amazing to see the town centre so packed with people from all backgrounds taking part in the fun! As we begin the Year of the Horse – which signals momentum, bold action, and reinvention – may we all experience a year of blessings, fresh opportunities, personal growth and happiness!"



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Teenage female ambassador flying the flag for Warrington at UK Galaxy Pageant Final

A Warrington teenager has been congratulated by the town's Mayor for her outstanding commitment to volunteering and community service as she prepares to represent the town on a national stage at the UK Galaxy Pageant Final.

Isabelle "Issy" Grace Thompson, aged 14, a finalist in the UK Galaxy Pageant, has been congratulated by Warrington Mayor Cllr. Mo Hussain for her remarkable volunteering efforts at such a young age. Issy will represent Warrington in the UK Galaxy Pageant Final, a major achievement that highlights both her personal dedication and her pride in her hometown.

During a recent recognition, Mayor Hussain praised Issy's commitment, describing her as an inspiring example to other young people.

"It's absolutely amazing to see

someone so young doing so much volunteering," the Mayor said.

"Issy is a great example of what young people can achieve. I would say to many young people: follow what Issy does, be a volunteer, and be inspired by her."

Alongside her pageant journey, Issy has ambitious plans to continue giving back to the community. She is preparing to take part in a range of fundraising charity events, using her Instagram platform to raise awareness and vital funds for causes close to her heart.

She has already raised money for Plan International Africa to



help children in need and covers help with education. Issy has also donated pet food to Warrington Animal Welfare and will be volunteering for St Joseph's Family Centre in Warrington. She is also helping raise funds for The Christie via a justgiving page.

These events will include community-based activities and sponsored challenges designed to encourage others to get involved and support local and national charities.

Issy also plans to use her role as a Galaxy Pageant ambassador to empower and uplift young women, promoting confidence, self-belief and the importance of giving back. Through community engagement and social media, she hopes to

encourage young people to pursue their goals while making a positive difference to others. Her platform encourages young women to speak out if they have experienced abuse, and it raises awareness.

Representing Warrington in the UK Galaxy Pageant Final is a proud moment for Issy and the town alike, showcasing the impact that young volunteers can have.

As Mayor Hussain concluded: "Thank you, and congratulations. You are doing an amazing job."

"Issy Grace Thompson's journey stands as a powerful reminder that age is no barrier to making a meaningful impact — and Warrington will be cheering her on as she takes to the national stage."



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Business Angels launch to fuel growth for Cheshire's next generation of companies



Guests gather at the launch of Cheshire Business Angels at The Aviary, Alderley Park's Conference Centre.

Successful entrepreneurs from Cheshire and Warrington are investing their capital and expertise to accelerate the region's most promising businesses.

Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington's Growth Hub has launched Cheshire Business Angels – a network of up to 70 investors and high net worth individuals ready to back ambitious small businesses across healthcare, manufacturing, digital technology and beyond.

In partnership with Xeinadin

Accountants and Gorvins Solicitors, a Dragons' Den-style launch event took place at The Aviary, Alderley Park's Conference Centre.

Entrepreneurs pitched to investors, professional advisers, and banks, collectively seeking just under £2m in funding. Requests ranged from:

- £550k for an established

medicine and consumer health company to expand its team and accelerate product growth

- £132k for a start-up working to revolutionise the production of graphene from waste

Investors pledged to continue discussions with the companies ahead of formal investment decisions. Successful businesses will secure not only capital but ongoing strategic support from their investors, who receive equity stakes in return.

Before the pitches, industry leaders shared expert insight, including:

- British Business Bank (Delyth Edwards, Senior Manager, UK Network – North West England) explored angel investment's role in driving innovation and regional growth
- Gorvins Solicitors (Christian Mancier, Partner - Corporate Commercial) provided practical legal guidance for investors and founders
- Xeinadin Accountants (Paul Whitney, Head of Corporate Finance UK, and Adam Owens, Partner – Head of Tax Advisory UK North & Midlands) covered

financial and tax planning essentials for investment readiness

Cheshire and Warrington is home to over 41,000 businesses with national strengths in clean energy, life sciences and advanced manufacturing. The Business Angels initiative connects emerging companies with experienced entrepreneurs who can accelerate their path to success.

Steve Purdham, chair of the Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board, said: "The Business Angels offer businesses a vital opportunity to secure funding that could transform their operations and establish them among the region's trailblazing companies. We're delighted to partner with Xeinadin Accountants, Gorvins Solicitors, the British Business Bank and our investor network to support the next wave of ambitious firms."

The initiative supports the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES), a 20-year blueprint approved by the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board to deliver the highest rate of economic and productivity growth in the north.

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Paul Whitney, Head of Corporate Finance (UK) at Xeinadin Group addresses attendees at the Cheshire Business Angels launch.

Spotlight on Local Business

Building Momentum, Creating Impact

By Laurence Barrow

As we move further into our 20th year at Barrow Electrical, the momentum continues to build.

The past month has been a strong mix of progress, expansion and strategic growth — the things that continue to shape our journey.

We've been actively pricing and securing work across Bolton, Leeds, Edinburgh and Leicester, further strengthening our national footprint. Alongside this, we're preparing to commence a national compliance rollout for one of our key retail clients, a project that will see our teams operating across multiple locations throughout the UK. It's a significant programme of works and a clear sign of the trust clients place in our delivery and standards.

Internationally, we're continuing our three-year contract within the retail sector, with our team preparing to head back overseas to progress the next phase of works. Maintaining and delivering on long-term international partnerships is something we're extremely proud of and reflects the capability and consistency of our workforce.

Internally, we've strengthened

our structure with the arrival of our new Contracts Manager, Dan. A few weeks into the role, Dan has hit the ground running and is already proving to be a fantastic asset to the business. His leadership and organisation are helping us manage an expanding project portfolio while ensuring we continue to scale in a controlled and sustainable way.

In other news, we are incredibly proud and honoured to have been shortlisted for the High Sheriff's Award for Excellence in Enterprise. This recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the entire Barrow Electrical team, and we look forward to the awards night with excitement.

I've also had the opportunity to host clients at Manchester City through their international commercial team, alongside Jacob & Co., where we were introduced to some exceptional timepieces. It was a brilliant example of how strong relationships continue to create new opportunities, with

some exciting collaborations potentially ahead.

On a personal note, a visit with my family to the cancer research laboratories at the University of Liverpool was incredibly meaningful. My wife valued the chance to speak directly with professors and learn more about the groundbreaking work being done in the fight against cancer. It was both humbling and inspiring.

Preparations are well underway for our Charity Golf Day in

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partnership with Northwest Cancer Research on 10th July at The Mere Golf & Country Club, which is shaping up to be a fantastic day.

Momentum continues — and we're excited for what's ahead.



Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North

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Driving Instructor Ron Pickard celebrates 60 years of service!

MAYOR of Warrington Cllr. Mo Hussain has paid tribute to local Driving Instructor Ron Pickard, who is celebrating 60 years of service!

Born in 1943 and teaching since 1966, Ron has now dedicated 60 years to helping the people of Warrington learn to drive, and he's still going strong.

Over the decades, Ron has taught more than 8,000 people. He's taught parents, their children, their grandchildren, and now even their great-grandchildren. That's not just experience; that's a legacy.

Ron describes himself as "semi-retired," but he simply can't keep away from the job he loves. He still comes out during the week for lessons because he enjoys meeting people and being part of their journey. In fact, he says he can't go anywhere in Warrington without meeting someone he has taught!

From doctors and solicitors to bin men and police officers, Ron has taught people from every profession and every walk of life. His impact reaches across the whole community.

Paying tribute, Mayor Hussain said: "Ron must surely be one of, if not the longest-serving, driving instructors in the country. Sixty years in any profession is remarkable, but sixty years shaping the confidence and independence of thousands of people is truly extraordinary."

"Many may also remember that Ron once played in a band called

"Ron Pickard's Sounds." Sadly, the band folded after the other members passed away, and Ron is now the only surviving member, a

reflection of a lifetime rich in memories and service.

"Ron Pickard isn't just a driving instructor; he is part of Warrington's story."

"Thank you, Ron, for 60 years of dedication."



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It was great to have my dad, Kev, pop into the new-look Love Carpets showroom recently. Kev's now retired from the business, but as the man who helped build it from the ground up, he'll always be a big part of what Love Carpets stands for.

On the other side, I'm proud to introduce the next generation — my son, Tom — who's now officially joined the team. Tom's a fully qualified, time-served fitter with experience in carpets, vinyl, laminate, and LVT. He's worked with many different fitters over the years, learning every part of the trade from the ground up. Tom actually started fitting carpets at just 14 and knew straight away it was the career for him. By learning his trade independently before joining me, he's shown that everything he's achieved has been earned through hard work and dedication. As a dad, that makes me incredibly proud.

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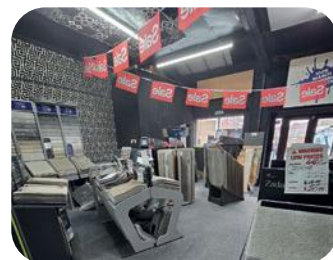
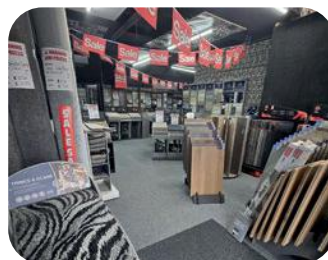
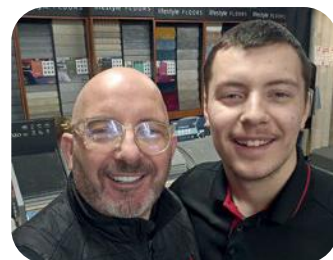
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Dementia specialist champions revealed at awards

As awards season gets underway with Oscars, BAFTAs, and Grammys nominations making for many a headline, social care's top talent has joined the party with its own glittering celebration.

Leading dementia specialist Belong has celebrated the best amongst its teams, crowning two teams from its Warrington village at their annual Champion Awards.

On Greenall House, judges were impressed with its team for their efforts in learning new skills to meet the need of residents, earning them the Respect for All – Inclusion award. This included supporting one living with motor neurone disease by attending special training to assist her with swallowing; embracing language app, Duolingo to communicate with an Italian customer, and taking on learning British Sign Language (BSL) to fully include a deaf resident in everyday life.

Tetley Household emerged victorious for the hotly contested Team of the Year, with judges lauding their work 'going above and beyond' for those in their care. In just one example, they support a resident living with Parkinson's to continue maintaining her independence in cooking, cleaning and carrying out daily activities.

In a family testimonial, praise was given in abundance for their professionalism and sensitivity in the lead up to the passing of a resident, ensuring his special requests for his

room, diet, and daily routine were met. The team was also hailed for offering person-centred care and continually going above the call of duty in their everyday work.

After receiving nominations from the organisation's customers, relatives and colleagues, a panel of independent judges determined winners from a final shortlist, with the results revealed at an evening gala at Manchester Hall. All were presented with a handmade ceramic trophy, designed by Belong customer, Brian Cherrington, as part of a creative competition for the occasion.

Speaking of the event, Belong's chief executive, Martin Rix, said: "Once again, our Belong Champion Awards have shone a spotlight on the incredible work happening day in,

day out, across our villages and home care teams. It's especially important to us to have our customers at the heart of everything we do, and they've embraced the opportunity to thank our dedicated colleagues.

"It really is people who ultimately create culture and make our organisation such a great place to live and work. Congratulations to all our finalists and winners."

The Belong Champion Awards 2025 was made possible thanks to sponsors: Allmanhall, boxxe, Browne Jacobson, carehome.co.uk, GHM Care, Lorne Stewart Facilities, Manchester Evening News, SB Waste, Search, Triangle PR.

More information about Belong Warrington can be found at www.belong.org.uk or by emailing enquiries@belong.org.uk



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But more than that, we create opportunities. Music, the arts, exercise, gardening, walks, talks, dominoes, darts, book clubs, bridge, outings, socials and, ultimately, friendships.

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Warrington
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Annual Report 2025/26



Giving Disabled People Hope & Opportunity



Introduction

Chair and Chief Executive's Report

Welcome to our latest annual report.

Throughout the past year, we listened, learned and respond to thousands of enquiries we received from disabled and older people, carers and families. Our team used their skills and expertise to find solutions to everyday challenges, and when we couldn't, we ensured a smooth handover to one of our trusted partners who could. We continued to share insights gained from disabled peoples lived experiences with policy makers and service providers.

"Hot" is the word that best describes our 34th annual Disability Awareness Day. Sixteen partners provided the financial support, enabling us to run a week of events that, along with our main show, attracted over 20,000 visitors and involved over 1,200 volunteers.

Our inclusive Santa's Grotto and Winter Wonderland in Walton Gardens attracted over 3,000 children and nearly 10,000 family members. With financial support from local businesses and individuals we distributed over 500 free tickets to disadvantaged children, and our annual Santa Dash attracted nearly 200 participants.

We used our status as a Disability Confident Leader to deliver a range of Disability Awareness and Reasonable Adjustment training sessions that were attended by over 600 people.

With funding we secured from Warrington Borough Council's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we offered free access and facilities audits to businesses and community organisations. The 80 disability access audit reports and recommendations we completed, together with over 200 free portable ramps, induction loop systems, handrails and signage, have enhanced accessibility for thousands of local disabled residents.

Our social enterprise, the Disability Trading Company continues to grow in popularity, attracting interest from new suppliers, and being invited to influence the design of several independent living products. Being recognised nationally as a Large Motability Dealer was one of the many highlights for our team. In response to feedback from disabled people about the damaging effects of the cost-of-living crisis we increased availability of refurbished equipment under the banner of Loved B4 Mobility through our store in Warrington Town Centre.

As we look ahead, we know that funding will be tougher than ever before. With Warrington Borough Council and local NHS commissioning teams planning huge multi-million-pound cuts, both internally and externally. The results will no doubt see contracts and grants to several of our core services withdrawn and this will inevitably leave vulnerable people at risk. Whilst appreciating that the year ahead will be

difficult, we aim to focus on maintaining our core purpose of improving the lives of people affected by disability and long-term health conditions.

One glimmer of light will be the launching of our new wide-beam canal boat, the Wizard II – John B which has been designed and built with accessibility in mind. Funding was made possible from a bequest from a lady who contacted our services to discuss her dream of buying an accessible narrowboat in honour of her late husband. This underlines the importance of one of our key values, that of listening and responding to feedback.

During the past year, we sadly lost three members of our WDP family. Our thoughts go out to the families and friends of Mark Stevenson, Terry Wadsworth and Pat Maclaren. May they all rest in peace.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who shares and supports the WDP dream, especially our volunteers, our trustees, our staff, our supporters, our clients/customers and our partners.

John Gartside OBE DL JP
Chair of Trustees

Dave Thompson MBE DL MBA
Chief Executive



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2025 Highlights

The year in pictures



The WDP Galleries Community Cafe received a 5 Star Food Hygiene Rating.



Congratulations to Parker, winner of the writing competition hosted by the WDP 'All Seasons Creative Writing Group' at DAD 2025.



AKW Charity Golf Day raised over £9,500 to support WDP services.



Six successful DAD Week events held in the lead up to Disability Awareness Day including the fantastic 'Bjorn to Be' Abba tribute night.



Successful Grotto Appeal supported by local individuals and businesses, enabled WDP to distribute over 500 tickets to disadvantaged children to visit Santa.



Who we are and what we do

Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) is an internationally acclaimed user-led charity. With over 30 years of experience in developing and delivering mobility and independent living services, we aim to support disabled people and those living with long-term health conditions. We are proud of our wide-ranging services, which include:

Promoting Independent Living

Visit our **Centre for Independent Living (CIL)** - located on Beaufort Street; the **Disabled Living Centre** at the Lifehouse on Brunswick Dock; and the **Mobility and Independent Living Stores (MILs)** in Birchwood Shopping Centre and Golden Square Shopping Centre. We offer showrooms full of the latest equipment from baths, showers and kitchens to beds, wheelchairs and stair lifts. Advice is available from our team of trained staff and volunteers, and we also have a short-term hires service for various equipment.

The **Energy Support Service** provides help and support to households falling into fuel poverty. The fully qualified advisors will give 1-2-1 advice along with home visits and referrals to wider services. We also have a fully accessible **"Energy Efficient Smart Flat"** demonstrating the latest assistive technology solutions, based at the CIL. Our popular **Disability Helpline (01925 240064)** offers advice and support about local support groups and services, accessibility, transport, and more.

Our two **Shopmobility Schemes** in Legh Street Car Park and Birchwood Shopping Centre offer scooters and wheelchairs for use while shopping. They are available for hire to both members and day visitors, Monday to Saturday (9 am to 5 pm). A six-month membership costs just £10. The **Scoota Safe** campaign helps promote safe use of personal equipment, advice on maintenance and raises awareness of road safety.

The **OWCH Pain Management and Beyond the Scars support group** helps and supports local disabled people with self-management of Chronic Pain.

Our **Long Covid Support Group** meets every other Friday and online. The group supports all those who are dealing with the symptoms of Long Covid.

Our **Independent Living Team** provides a support service for Warrington residents who use the Direct Payments scheme from Warrington Borough Council, assisting with all aspects of employing a Personal Assistant including assistance and advice regarding recruitment, DBS checks, pension schemes and contracts, with support from our in-house payroll team.

Our Care and Support Advisor promotes **Personal Health Budgets (PHBs)** for individuals with complex health needs throughout Warrington and Halton. PHBs aim to allow greater choice, flexibility and control over how and when NHS-funded care is delivered. The Advisor works with the clients to produce individual Care and Support Plans, liaising with the NHS Cheshire & Merseyside concerning individual budget allocations.

The Disability Trading Company Limited

WDP's trading arm – Disability Trading Company (DTC), offers high-quality, independent living products at competitive prices. Running as a Social Enterprise, all profits are donated to WDP to support many of our unfunded services. For further details of services, please see page 6.

Employment & Training

Our **Employment Team** specialises in supporting local disabled people, people living with long-term health conditions (including mental health), ESA claimants and

those in receipt of incapacity-related benefits. The team support individuals through all stages of the employment process, job searching, CVs, application forms, preparing for interviews and when gaining employment. We also support people who are in work, as well as employers, by giving information about reasonable adjustments in the workplace including the Access to Work Scheme, the Disability Confident Scheme. We are a Mindful Employer.

Learning and Development

Visit the **Marjorie Griffiths Learning Centre** on Beaufort Street and take advantage of a whole host of courses designed to educate and inspire. Many courses are held in the Discover IT Suite and include 'Computers for the Terrified', vocational OCR qualifications and pre-employment IT. In addition, several other courses are available, which include flower arranging and creative writing.

We work closely with numerous local charities and voluntary organisations to provide a place for groups to meet and offer support to their members. Our well-equipped meeting and training rooms are also available to hire at a reasonable cost.

WDP delivers a variety of training, including **Equality & Diversity, Disability Confident, Neurodiversity and Disability, and Sex Matters**. Half-day training sessions are available to service providers, voluntary organisations and individuals to build knowledge and insight on these issues.

Accessible Holidays & Days Out

Our fully accessible caravan in North Wales is available for hire at competitive rates as will our adapted, accessible narrowboat **The Wizard II - John B** will later this year. With a range of options, they allow a bargain break or a day out on the water!

Opportunities to Socialise

We run two **Luncheon Clubs** for individuals looking for friendship, activities, fun and lunch! Our **over 55's club** meet every Wednesday from 10am to 2pm. As well as enjoying a two-course lunch and drinks, attendees also enjoy playing bingo, games, quizzes, chair-based exercises, and guest speakers. Our **Monday Club** caters to under 55's with a variety of social activities, including crafts, bingo and films. There is a £7.50 charge for the sessions and individuals are required to attend using their own transport.

Our **Galleries Community Café** offers a wide range of hot and cold meals, snacks and drinks in a warm and friendly atmosphere. The Café is open to members of the public, visitors to the Centre and Support Groups.

Listening and Advocacy

Get your voice heard locally by attending our monthly **'Staying Connected'** meetings via Zoom, which provides a forum to exchange ideas and information about local services. Sessions are open to all who have been affected by long-term health conditions or disabilities, carers and representatives of support groups/organisations and statutory services.

We organise the **Warrington's Appreciation of Efforts Awards**, which provide an opportunity for disabled people and carers to nominate local employers, businesses, service providers or individuals who deserve recognition for promoting independence, delivering accessible or inclusive services or maintaining exemplary employment practices for disabled people and carers.

For further information on any of these services, including how you can be involved as a WDP Volunteer, please contact the team on 01925 240064

2025 Highlights

The year in pictures



Disability Trading Company launched their first TV advert, in collaboration with Pride.



The Going the Extra Mile Scuba Challenge, supported by Cheshire Scuba Academy saw divers take on a 64-length (mile) Scuba Challenge. A number of beginners also took on a try-dive challenge.



Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Mo Hussain chose WDP as one of his Charities for his Mayoral Year. As well as supporting our events, he has also arranged a number of fundraising events.



Accessible 6-Berth Holiday Home

Pensarn, North Wales

Funded by:  Funded by UK Government  WARRINGTON Borough Council

Our brand-new fully accessible caravan welcomed its first visitors.



The Today Team took on the Fire Walk challenge alongside WDP volunteers, raising over £2,000.

Development of Warrington Disability Partnership's Social Enterprise — The Disability Trading Company

In April 2011, Warrington Disability Partnership launched a social enterprise 'The Disability Trading Company'. Their first retail service was launched from the Warrington Centre for Independent Living, and in October 2011 they opened the Mobility & Independent Living Store (MILS) in the Golden Square Shopping Mall, followed by MILS Liverpool in early 2012.

In early 2013 DTC opened a large Mobility Workshop & Service Centre which provides servicing and repairs for individual customers, and businesses including Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, nursing homes and local Shopmobility Schemes. In late 2013 DTC launched a service aimed at recycling mobility equipment, scooters, wheelchairs and power-chairs.

Second-hand products are refurbished and recycled to be sold at a low cost to local people from our Golden Square shop. In partnership with other organisations, such as Care UK, products that are unable to be sold are donated to help disabled people in other countries. To-date, over £1 million worth of equipment has been donated to support disabled people across the world; including in Thailand, Egypt, Cameroon, Syria, Ukraine and Greece.

In 2017 DTC joined the British Health Trades Association, underlining their belief in the BHTA "Buy with Confidence" scheme that is accredited to Trading Standards. Receiving "approved dealer" accreditation to the national Motability Scheme was also achieved, which allows disabled people to use the enhanced mobility component of DLA or PIP to lease a powerchair or mobility scooter.

In 2018 DTC opened a new service, the Smart Flat is an assistive technology showroom located at the Warrington Centre for Independent living.

In 2019 in partnership with the Golden Square Shopping Centre, DTC moved their Mobility & Independent Living Store (MILS) from inside the Centre to a larger brighter store in Sankey Street.

In 2020 in partnership with Birchwood Shopping Centre, DTC opened a Mobility and Independent Living Store (MILS) in the Centre, it also includes Birchwood Shopmobility Service.

In 2022, DTC launched a new online shop designed so customers across the UK can purchase high-quality mobility & independent living products from the comfort of their homes. All our products can help increase your ability to live independently. We pride ourselves on a fast delivery service, and promise to pick up and send you your order before the end of the next working day. If you are unsure what products best fit your needs or have any questions, visit our website's contact us page.

For more products to make life easier, visit our website: <https://disabilitytradingcompany.co.uk/collections/all>.

What makes DTC unique?

- DTC has no private shareholders, 100% of its profits go to support WDP's charitable services which include subsidised Lunch Clubs for disabled people, an accessible narrowboat offering daytrips on the Bridgewater Canal and an accessible caravan in North Wales,
- DTC staff do not receive any incentive bonuses, which results in us providing advice versus high pressure selling,
- Free impartial home and work assessments based on the philosophy of information, advice and guidance, not just sales,
- DTC is a user-led social enterprise; many staff and all volunteers have used their experience of living with a disability or long-term health condition to develop the services and ensure they sell the right products
- Nearly £2.5million has been saved by disabled people who have purchased mobility and independent living products from WDP's Mobility and Independent Living Stores (MILS) rather than from commercially driven businesses

Services, Locations and Contact Details

Centre for Independent Living
Beaufort Street
Warrington
WA5 1BA

Mobility & Independent Living Showrooms
Email: ShowRoom@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Workshop and Service Centre
Email: Workshop@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Galleries Cafe

Payroll Services

Tel: 01925 240064

Loved B4 Mobility
Golden Square Shopping Centre
30 Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1TD
Tel: 01925 416624

Mobility & Independent Living Showrooms
Lifehouse
Summers Road
Liverpool
L3 4BL

Tel: 0151 709 0121

Email: Liverpoolmils@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Mobility & Independent Living Store - Birchwood
Unit 6
Birchwood Shopping Centre
Dewhurst Road
Birchwood
WA3 7PG

Tel: 01925 251079

Email: birchwoodmils@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Mobility & Independent Living Store - Warrington
Golden Square Shopping Centre
30 Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1TD

Tel: 01925 416624

Email: Mils@disabilitypartnership.org.uk



owned and
operated by



Our Impact in 2025

WDP Purpose

'To enhance the lives of disabled people and their families by enabling independent living'

The business directory describes social impact as being the effect of an activity on the social fabric of the community and well-being of the individuals and families. Whilst many people are aware of the wide range and scope of the services that Warrington Disability Partnership provide, the direct effect that they have on a person's life, is not necessarily always apparent. This supplementary report has been produced by us to show the impact that our services have on local disabled people, their families, friends and carers throughout 2025.

Over **45,000** people visited the Centre for Independent Living in 2025

100%

of WDP Team members feel proud to be a part of the team- WDP Team Values Survey 2025

“ If it wasn't for the disability scooter hire, I would not be able to visit Golden Square. I have my own scooter but if I am alone, I can't get out of the car. This is an amazing service! Lovely people who run it, they are so helpful **”**

Shopmobility User

Our Showrooms



“ Very welcoming, informative and friendly staff, very good range of products with good advice. Very pleased **”**

DTC Customer

Ed Spiers - Volunteer Case Study

When did you start volunteering at WDP?

I started volunteering for WDP in 2014 as a steward for Disability Awareness Day. I had attended the event by helping my mum on a council stall since I was a kid and I always saw the stewards having fun so I wanted to have a go.

Why do you like volunteering?

I like volunteering because it gives me the opportunity to explore my potential and develop new skills in a supportive, inclusive environment.

About Ed:

My name is Ed, I am 32 years old and when I am not volunteering, I enjoy talking to my friends on the internet about our shared interests like VLDL and like doing all sorts of arts and crafts. I studied arts and design in college and I like to use those skills.

What has volunteering done for you?

Volunteering has really helped me come out of my shell. I am autistic and struggle with self-esteem, when I first started I would barely speak but over the years with the support and encouragement of the friendly people here, I have begun to find my own voice.



Our Impact



Over

£320,000

is spent annually by Shopmobility members and visitors in Warrington Town Centre
WDP Shopmobility Service 2025

Mark Pattie - Volunteer Case Study

When did you start volunteering at WDP?

I started volunteering at WDP in November 2024 in the finance office.

How did you start volunteering at WDP?

I had applied for a job in October 2024 but was unsuccessful so I started volunteering for the organisation.

Why do you like volunteering?

- I like the social aspect and supportive atmosphere.
- It has given me more confidence with job prospects and helps me with social skills and finance skills.
- I can give something back to the community and have attended DAD for a number of years.

About Mark:

I currently live at home with my parents. I also enjoy swimming, rowing (I am a member of the Runcorn Rowing Club Adaptive Rowing Squad) and I enjoy going to pub quizzes and I occasionally help setting quizzes. I also play the keyboard and am good at finance (I have both AAT Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications).

What has WDP done for you?

It has given me a routine and increased my social skills and general confidence.



Wellbeing Group Achievements

Formed in November 2022, the Wellbeing Group is led by members of staff and is supported by the Senior Management Team and trustees. Its purpose is to implement a Wellbeing strategy for the benefit of all who work and volunteer at WDP. There have been many achievements over the last three years, but the highlights of 2025 have been:

- A Wellbeing focus in our annual Team survey
- Occupational and Mental Health support
- Neuro-divergency peer support and staff training programme (now used externally)
- Responding to matters raised by team members such as building safety measures, heating and lone worker working procedures
- Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Quiet space provision

Whilst continuing to build on our achievements to-date, our new focus for 2026 will be to:

- Increase the number of Mental Health first-aiders
- Provide a bi-annual Wellness Day
- Produce a Wellbeing Events Calendar
- Acquire a corporate wholesale warehouse card to enable individual membership
- Facilitate social/information events



WDP Energy Team at their annual Winter Fuel Advice and Wellbeing Event

“I received totally exceptional service and attention that was far beyond my expectations. I did not realise that this wonderful service was so close to hand and will staying touch with team do any future help I need.”

Energy Support Service User

et in 2025

Main reasons to use the WDP Shopmobility Service

- 1 Shopping in the Town Centre
- 2 Going for a meal or drink in the Town Centre (socialising with friends)
- 3 Attending NHS and Council appointments

Shopmobility Survey 2025

402

Registered members at our Shopmobility Service, with over 85% using the service weekly



Louise James - Case Study

I started working at WDP in October 2025, I had lost my job in June 2024 due to menopause symptoms, and I thought no-one would want to hire me.

I started seeing Lorraine with the employment team at WDP not long after, and boy did she have her work cut out for her!! I used to sit at her desk feeling so sorry for myself and mainly crying, she was amazingly patient with me and helped to build my confidence back up, she (very kindly) made me appointments when all I wanted to do was stay in bed. After some time she called me to say I have the perfect job for you and did I want to apply, I did! And she was right, this is perfect! Lorraine was my angel in all of this!

My role at WDP is to help people find a personal assistant for people living with disabilities, I get to go out into the community and meet people with all kinds of disabilities, some visible some not, and help them with the paperwork to help to enable them to stay in their own homes. I finally feel happy and content and the best thing is the people we help. The second-best thing is the people here at Warrington Disability Partnership, they are lovely to work alongside with.

I also got involved with the Grotto at Christmas, pure joy!! I worked as an elf with Santa and just seeing the children's faces, it sounds corny but it really was the highlight of my year.

Even though I came here to see Lorraine I did not know about all WDP does, I did two flower arranging courses here and loved it! There is always something going on, the first time I saw the smart flat I was blown away!! If you haven't seen it yet you need too!!

My home life is a little chaotic at the moment as I have an eight-month-old Jack Russell pup called, wait for it, Russell! I'm doing a lot of walking with him whatever the weather and in my downtime, I love to read, and I read anything! My prized possession is my kindle; it goes everywhere with me just in case I get a moment.



“Extremely good professional service, they do a brilliant job and are friendly and helpful too would recommend you, Thank You all!”

DTC Customer

“After my Paralympic career ended, I found it very difficult finding employment. I struggled transitioning to civilian life and despite attending the Job Centre, Remploy and Shaw Trust on a regular basis, it felt like no one really understood my needs as someone with long-term conditions and disability. I doubt I would have been so successful in gaining and sustaining employment without consistent support from the WDP Employment Team. Following a low point in life my confidence and skills have blossomed and i have gone from strength to strength.”

WDP Employment Team client

Our Impact in 2025



600+

Local disabled people supported to complete forms for assistance

Personal Development - Ellen Houghton

Ellen started volunteering at WDP when she was 12 years old within the main office. She would help with administration, answering phone calls and help with fundraising events on the weekend. At the age of 15 Ellen was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer and was hospitalised for 2 years, throughout her time in hospital she kept contact with team members and would visit occasionally, WDP donated to Ellen's cause to fund her dream trip to America.

After receiving all clear, she continued voluntary work with the charity and even becoming a co-opted young trustee and after college became an apprentice studying Level 3 Business Administration while also promoting covid vaccines as a community champion. After working in a junior administrator's role, she completed her apprenticeship successfully and became a full-time staff member working within the energy team as administrator completing and passing her exams. Whilst being fully qualified she then moved up took the place of advisor within the team whilst still completing the team's administration. Due to gaps within the office from members leaving, she stepped up and took on more responsibility and gaining new skills learning leadership coordinating our in house HAF programme alongside Caroline. Ellen also found herself looking after more duties within the team and eventually becoming Energy Efficiency Team Leader.

Thanks to WDP they gave me a good start in life enabling me to gain the skills, confidence and qualifications needed to be the person i am today.



“Excellent customer service and patience explaining how to maneuver the scooter and gave us recommendations on scooters according to our needs.”

DTC Customer

387

Employers supported by the Payroll team to employ over 700 local people

“Without WDP services, I would be isolated and a lot more dependant on others, which would result in a deterioration of my mental health.”

WDP Shopmobility Member

“Your support has made a big difference to our autistic son to get out of the house and try new activities ”

Local Carer

Mr and Mrs J - Customer Testimonial

Mr and Mrs J were a retired couple struggling to live off their pensions, they had worked all their lives with Mr J working within the army. During their working lives they had acquired long term health conditions and multiple disabilities. Mrs J reached out to Warrington Disability Partnership in the hope of seeking advice and help.

They had a lot of additional costs for daily living aids, which were helping them to be more independent within their home. Their advisor visited their home and after a short conversation it was apparent they could both claim Attendance Allowance.

After completing the forms with the couple and waiting for a result, we had the successful news that they had both been awarded Attendance allowance at full rate for Mrs J and low rate for Mr J and were very emotional. They now feel less anxious and can live a lot more comfortably with heat in their home and food on the table, with the increased income. Mrs J said “Thank you so much to WDP, you have changed our lives forever”.

Disability Awareness Day 2025 (DAD34)

In complete contrast to the showers in 2024, One word best described Disability Awareness Day 2025 “HOT”. Over 20,000 people visited the 34th Annual event at Walton Hall & Gardens.

The aim of our flagship event, widely known as the world's largest voluntary led pan disability exhibition was to promote independent living through the theme “It's what disabled people can do that matters” and was the culmination of a week-long of activities raising awareness about disability.

Local disability education specialists Expanse Learning Group and the north west's water supplier United Utilities, led the list of sponsors for DAD 2025. The event highlighted solutions supporting independent living and mobility, with equipment, products, transport, employment, education, training, health and social care, leisure activities, alongside over 100 charities/support groups. During the day we were also honored by the presence of three local dignities, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, the High Sheriff of Cheshire and the Mayor of Warrington.

Most of this year's Disability Awareness Day exhibitors were housed in a huge, tented village of marquees, supported by; an extended Sports Zone, a Main Arena, a huge Performing Arts Marquee, three further Arts Marquees for art and crafts

(including regular workshops), a Silent Disco, a children's fun fair and play areas.

With over 200 exhibitors, visitors could gain an insight into the help and support that is available locally, regionally and nationally from statutory organisations, businesses and voluntary sector groups, as well as trying new and adaptive activities including Tennis, Snooker, Rugby League, Martial Arts, Tai Chi, Football, Scuba Diving in the on-site pool and Warrington Youth Zone's giant sports inflatables.

For those looking for a more relaxed day a fantastic line-up of talent could be found in the Arts Marquee with performances from some of the UK's leading disabled artists including Ella Performance Group, Creating Adventures, Wargrave Community Choir, Carly Ryan and Groovy Movers. BSL interpreters supported all acts.

Alternatively, the Main Arena hosted a variety of lively acts including the Guide Dog display team, Reach Sled Dogs Display Team, Batida Rio Samba Band, Royal Marines Corps of Drums and sports demonstrations.

Support services at DAD 2025 included a free accessible Park and Ride service, free accessible buses from Warrington Town Centre courtesy of Warrington's Own Buses, a free mobility scooter and wheelchair loan service (subject to availability), British Sign Language interpreters, additional unisex wheelchair accessible toilets and over 60 trained stewards and helper's eager to make it a day to remember for everyone

The DAD site team were joined during the week by over seventy volunteers from EE, nine from Terry Lifts, six from Handelsbanken and 10 from Thorn Cross prison who all helped to set up the site in preparation for the event.

The DAD Management Team would like to thank all of our sponsors, supporters and volunteers, without their continued support the event would not be possible. Our next DAD event will be held on Sunday 12th July 2026. For more details, please visit the DAD website www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk



DAD Week Events 2025

- Carers' Wellbeing Festival
- Creating Adventures “Don't stop us now! - Tribute to We will rock you”
- Warrington In Mind
- Ellas' “Summertime Special”, a showcase of talented entertainers.
- “Party in the Park” for disabled children, young disabled people and young carers.
- “Bjorn to be Abba”, the UK's leading Abba tribute band.
- Today Team “Charity Fire Walk”

New for DAD 2025

- The new “Access All Areas” Arts Project, a collaboration between Warrington Disability Partnership and Culture Warrington, included a gallery showcasing the work of local disabled artists.
- A new programme of “have a go” workshops was hosted in the in the Arts Zone, offering visitors the opportunity to take part in new activities including dance and creative writing.

Christmas 2025 at WDP

Once again, our fully accessible and inclusive Santa's Grotto was held in The Old Riding Stables at Walton Gardens, Warrington. Our team of staff and volunteers worked tirelessly with the support of several local businesses including EE, Handelsbanken, Thorn Cross and ABB to ensure that our magical Grotto and Winter Wonderland were ready for the official opening by the Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Mo Hussain, on Saturday 29th November.

As well as the Winter Wonderland and Grotto experience, the area featured a wide array of wonderful festive activities to take part in, including craft activities, gingerbread decorating, and Christmas Market stalls. Entertainment from local groups and artists Wargrave Community Choir, Warrington Signing Choir, Wired for Sound and Zuzana Tomasikova brought a real community feel to the festivities.

On Sunday 7th December, over 140 Santa's also took part in our annual Santa Dash, a 3km walk/dash/push around a wintery Walton Gardens.

All this in addition to providing visitors with information, advice and guidance to support local, disabled people and those affected by disability.

Santa's Grotto Appeal 2025

Following the success of our 2024 appeal raising funds to provide local disadvantaged children with complimentary tickets to Santa's Grotto, the team were committed to support those who would otherwise not be able to

Thanks to the support of local individuals, businesses and organisations and that of our partners at social services, education and local charities we were able to give over **500** tickets away free to families in need. These tickets included a visit to the Winter Wonderland and Santa, a gift, photo memory, selection box and gingerbread decorating.

It was a fantastic way to start our 2025 grotto. The gratitude that our visitors showed was humbling and hearing the stories from some of the families underlined why this was so important.

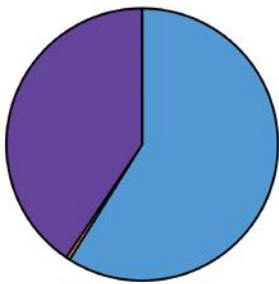


What makes our Grotto unique?

- Not only is the grotto fully wheelchair accessible, so too is the undercover winter wonderland scenery that is held in the indoor riding school at Walton Hall and Gardens, Warrington. Warrington Disability Partnership have over 20 years' experience of running a fully inclusive Santa's Grotto, which can be visited by all.
- WDP's Santa and some of our elves can communicate with deaf children and parents through British Sign Language.
- After listening to parents, WDP have included Quiet Hours, where the individual needs of children, parents and grandparents can be met, including Autism, Dementia and Alzheimer's.
- The Quiet Hour also caters for people who have sight loss, with trained sighted guides offering guided tours and interactive experience including touching, feeling and smelling a Christmas tree and other display items, within the sensory area.

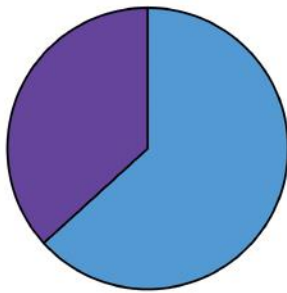
WDP Financial Position 2024-25

Income £2,758,846



- Other Trading Activities (£1.62m)
- Charitable Activities (£1.11m)
- Donations and Legacies (£13.12k)
- Investment (£341)

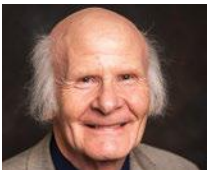
Expenditure £2,556,868



- Charitable Activities (£1.61m)
- Other (£939.19k)

The above information has been taken from the audited, consolidated, Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) Accounts for the financial period 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025, as reported to the Charities Commission. These accounts include the Disability Trading Company (DTC) accounts.

WDP Board of Trustees & DTC Directors



JOHN GARTSIDE OBE JP DL
Chair



PAT FFRENCH
Vice-Chair &
DTC Board Member

In Memory of our
Honorary Vice-President, Terry Wadsworth
and WDP Trustee Pat McLaren,
who we sadly lost during 2025



Their support and dedication for many years
helped to shape and develop WDP to the
organisation it is today. May they rest in peace.



EILEEN MACDONALD
Treasurer & DTC Board Member



JAN PRITCHARD
Secretary



PAM THOMPSON
Honorary President



GARY SKENTELBERY
WDP Patron



SUE McMILLAN



DAVE KELSALL



ADAM HAINES



ANITA CAWLEY



DEREK JONES



TONY BROWN



JANET HENSHAW



ELLEN HOUGHTON
WDP Young Trustee



CLLR MO HUSSAIN



NICOLA KETTLEY



DAVID JONES
DTC Chair



SHAUN RYAN
DTC Non-executive director



BILL BRADLEY
DTC Non-executive director



JAMIE BOYD
DTC Non-executive director



DIANE SANDWELL

2025 Highlights

The year in pictures



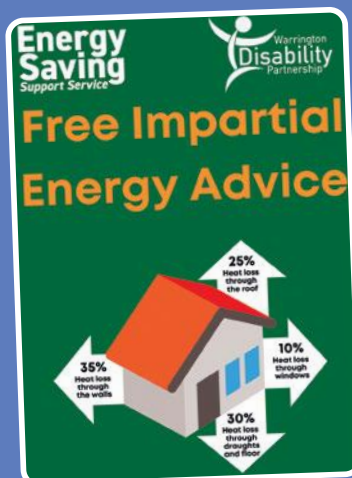
The Team completed 80 disability access audit reports for local Warrington businesses, providing over 200 free portable ramps, induction loop systems, handrails and signage.



Throughout 2025, Team WDP attended over 100 different community events; including displaying our Invacare alongside NW Classic Cars



WDP hosts a wide variety of fundraising activities throughout the year, including our popular Christmas, Easter & Halloween Bingo nights.



After successfully receiving new funding our Energy Support Service has continued to organise drop-in session, large events and have complete individual and personalised home assessments around saving energy.



WDP Annual Charity Dinner, sponsored by Today Team was held at the Village Hotel with amazing performances from JK Productions.

Working in Partnership

A Big Thank You

Warrington Disability Partnership would like to thank everyone that has supported, donated and worked alongside us during the past 12 months - including:

- United Utilities
- BAS (NW) Ltd
- AKW Ltd
- Warrington Borough Council
- Torus
- Expanse Learning
- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside
- Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust
- Energy Redress Scheme
- Disability Positive
- Cadent Gas Network
- Protive Security & Surveillance
- Terry Lifts
- Porters Care
- Digicare
- Cheshire Community Foundation
- Catalyst Choices
- Warrington's Own Buses
- David Lewis
- UPS Building & Maintenance
- Ella Performance Group
- Warrington Worldwide
- Golden Square Shopping Centre
- F11 Photography
- Walton Hall and Gardens
- Mark Bates Insurance
- Birchwood Shopping Centre
- Today Team
- Warrington Business Exchange
- IEG Group
- SIA UK
- Right at Home
- Watsons' Solicitors
- G-Force Communications
- Birchwood Lions Club
- Pro-Despatch Ltd
- Ingevity
- Zeno & Engage
- Fast Move Properties
- Cllr Stuart Mann
- Driven Asset Finance
- Fun Leisure
- Accolade Social Care CIC
- Crossed Heart Crochet
- Warrington Voluntary Action
- Handelsbanken
- ABB
- Cheshire Scuba Academy
- Thorn Marine
- Aaron & Partners
- Warrington Youth Zone
- Sue Bentley MBE
- The Heritage Café Walton Gardens
- Creating Adventures
- WBC - Highways Assets Team
- Cheshire Mix 56 Radio
- Radio General - Hospital Radio
- HCC Printers
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- Cheshire Times
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- St John Ambulance
- Warrington Sea Cadets TS Obdurate
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- John, Brun & Ethel Munslow
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Pat McLaren
Terry Wadsworth
Matthew Morley
Frank Woods
Phillippa Cannon

Bequest

Catherine Davies

Legacy Donation – Wizard II - John B

After 18 years which saw a total refurbishment and numerous major repairs, Warrington Disability Partnership's Wizard accessible narrowboat was finally retired due to it being unfit to continue in service.

During those 18 years over 20,000 passengers, many were wheelchair users, had a wonderful, relaxing day trip on the scenic Bridgewater Canal, thanks to our amazing team of volunteers.

However, after an amazing donation from a wonderful lady, who wanted to leave a charitable legacy, specifically for an accessible boat in memory of her husband, the "Wizard II - John B" will be launched in time for 2026 season.

"Wizard II - John B" is currently under construction and has been designed to be fully accessible, not retrofitted like our original Wizard. It won't simply be accessible, this can be driven by wheelchair users, the accessible toilet will be full size and the lift is a proper wheelchair lift, built specifically for this boat.

"Wizard II - John B" will be bigger, 10ft 6ins wide and 50ft long compared to 6ft 6ins wide and 37ft long. She will have full central heating, independent lighting, a quiet engine, a galley kitchen and detachable windows to allow passengers to get

closer to the water and breathe in the fresh air.





**Mayor's Charity Dinner
The Village Hotel
Friday 8th May**

**AKW Golf Day
Houghwood Golf Course
Shotgun Start
Tuesday 16th June**

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Organised by: Warrington Disability Partnership

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In Partnership with: WARRINGTON Borough Council, Warrington Worldwide, FII

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Old Riding School
Warrington - WA4 6SN

Quiet Hour & Schools - Via Appointment Only

3K SANTA DASH/WALK

Sunday 6th December 2026

10.00am Start
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Walton Gardens
WA4 6SN

In aid of: Warrington Disability Partnership

Registered charity no: 1113597

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on 01925 240064

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Acorn2oak Hypnotherapy: Small Shifts, Powerful Transformation

After experiencing the powerful benefits of hypnotherapy and uncovering her true vocation, Rachel Kinney has established her own practice, Acorn2oak Hypnotherapy, based in Appleton, Warrington.

Rachel said: "For 20 years I worked as a Primary School teacher in Warrington. However, a life changing event profoundly impacted my health and wellbeing and I found myself struggling with debilitating anxiety that made everyday feel overwhelming.

"I remember sitting in the doctor's surgery back in 2013, with a strong sense that I was in the wrong place. Medication didn't feel right for me, and a ten-minute appointment wasn't going to address what I was really experiencing. I began exploring complementary therapies and, through trial and error, found approaches that genuinely helped.

"This experience was the catalyst for a significant change in my life. I realised that the path I was on was no longer serving me, and I needed to make a change

to find true happiness, health and purpose. My own healing led me to pursue complementary therapy training, which ignited my passion for holistic healing and eventually hypnotherapy.

"Now, I'm proud to say I've found my true calling. At Acorn2Oak Hypnotherapy, I'm passionate about helping people understand the mind-body connection, reclaim control, and live fulfilling, happy lives. I use a solution-focused approach, which means we don't dwell on the past but instead focus on finding effective ways forward for the challenges you're facing right now. Together, we'll identify and break unhelpful thought patterns that may be holding you back, enabling meaningful and lasting change.

"Whether you're experiencing fear, anxiety, low mood, or other mental health challenges, my personalised approach ensures therapy is tailored to your individual needs. I offer a compassionate, non-judgemental space where you'll feel safe, heard, and supported every step of the way.

"I have a particular interest in supporting both children and adults to manage anxiety, stress, and overwhelm. This is brief therapy, with clients typically

requiring between 6 and 12 sessions.

"I work with clients on a one-to-one basis and also deliver engaging presentations that help people understand how the brain works -including what happens when the fight, flight, or freeze response is triggered.

If you're feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or simply curious about how hypnotherapy could help you move forward, I invite you to take the first step today. **Book a complimentary discovery video call** to explore how this transformative therapy could support you. Get in touch now via my website or email and start your journey towards lasting change."



**Plant the seed of change
watch your life thrive!**



Rachel Kinney

Hypnotherapist & Psychotherapist
(DSFH, HPD, AfSFH, NCH)

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Massive Wagons top the bill of high-energy rock 'n' roll at Parr Hall

AS I left Warrington's historic Parr Hall still buzzing after possibly the most high-energy rock 'n' roll gig I've ever witnessed, I was left wondering why Massive Wagons had never really been on my radar before?

I'd seen them a few years back as a support band to Lynyrd Skynyrd, but missed out on their last sell-out gig at the Parr Hall last year.

I checked their music out a couple of weeks ahead of this gig, and liked the sound of what I was hearing.

Now I think it is fair to say I have become a massive fan.

The energy levels of lead vocalist Barry Mills are like nothing I have seen before – maybe Angus Young in his younger years?

As a veteran of rock gigs of more than half a century and having seen the likes of Status Quo, UFO, Michael Schenker, Magnum, Blackstar Sailor and The Stranglers grace the Parr Hall stage, this one topped the lot.

The quality of the music, the energy of the performers, the intimacy of the venue and the support of men's mental health, supporting Andy's Man's Club, it had everything – including four t-shirts for as little as £10!! (Yes, I've got one!!)

While I recognised a handful of the songs that rolled out over one hour and 40 minutes, I think it's fair to say I enjoyed every single song. When the guys came back

for the encore, just wearing their underpants, I did start to wonder – but when Barry told the crowd "you have to do what the Mrs says to support mental health," I understood exactly where he was coming from.

The band clearly enjoyed the intimacy of the Parr Hall, with Barry, entering the crowd for a full five minutes during the encore, singing along and embracing fans-moments which will live long in the memory of those in the audience.

Based on this performance, I believe Massive Wagons are set to become "massive," filling the void left by the veteran rockers from 50 years ago, who have already ended their journey, or are set to do so in the next few years as Father Time catches up with them all.

I truly hope Massive Wagons can make another triumphant return to the Parr Hall, but I fear they might outgrow the 1,300 capacity venue.

But having said that, I don't think these guys do it just for the money, so fingers crossed, the historic Parr Hall might just lure them back at least one more time! Fingers crossed!

According to Wikipedia, the band formed in Lancaster came

Review by Gary Skentelbery

together after guitarist Adam Thistlethwaite and vocalist Barry Mills broke away from their popular indie cover band Ace Face, after witnessing a gig by the Australian rock band Airbourne in Manchester, to write original hard rock music in 2009. Following a short period with another drummer and bass guitarist, the eventual line-up was secured by recruiting Alex Thistlethwaite (brother of Adam) on drums and friends Carl Cochrane and Adam Bouskill on second guitar and bass respectively. In 2017, Carl Cochrane departed and Stephen Holl joined the band

as second guitarist; this remains the only line-up change to date.

Next up for me is Airbourne in Manchester next month – a band I suspect might even match the energy of Massive Wagons, although I doubt anyone will ever headbang and pogo as much as front man Barry!

Finally a quick shout out to support band Scarlet Rebels – a four-piece rock band. I didn't manage to see the full set but from what I did see they had a good sound and went down well with the audience – and were certainly the perfect warm up act.



"Lessons in Sixth Form foster an atmosphere of curiosity and high quality learning. Students are highly motivated." *

lymmhigh.org.uk

* Ofsted 2024



Continually striving for excellence

Hi there!

Saturday 7th February saw Warrington's new music venue, Brickhaus, officially open and our own The Ambersons headlined to a full house.

You might remember Brickhaus as Eden or FC2 but the doors had been shut for a long time.

The venue had seen some DJ nights there but that Saturday had its first live artists on the stage and the renovation has made it an excellent choice to watch live music. The night opened with **Red Jaspers**, a young band whose first single *Tsunami!* has been quite popular on streaming services and social media. Following them, Ameritz live show regulars **Containers** brought a large crowd, their usual stage confidence and a new single, *Dead Forever*. The vibrant **Belmont and the Stocks**, an established band within the Warrington music scene were the main support act and delivered their usual energy and upbeat personalities right before **The Ambersons** took the stage.

The six-piece played their classics, which the fans sang and danced along to. Those who attended were also given a sneak peek into some of the tracks featured on the upcoming album.



The Ambersons in full swing at Brickhaus.

The night was a success and started the year on a high for The Ambersons. They have many more exciting events to come, which we are excited to share with you over the next couple of months.

GONDOLAS next single releases on Friday 20th February. The band have moved away from their grungy rock sound in *You Know That* and have taken inspiration from Wunderhorse and Fontaines D.C. for this reflective track.

If you'd like to hear it live they are supporting Creeping Jean at Liverpool's **Jacaranda** on Slater Street on Thursday 26th February followed by another support slot in Liverpool for Sky Valley Mistress at **Archive**, Cains Brewery Village on Saturday 3rd March. You can find ticket links over on **GONDOLAS** socials.



The Lower Angel Band are hitting the road!

If you didn't see our announcement... After an amazing sold out Album Launch at Warrington Irish Club, The Lower Angel Band are taking their sound on tour! The band are ready to light up stages and captivate audiences across the UK, and we're so excited to watch this album thrive from city to city. We are also pleased to announce that to finish the tour, The Lower Angel Band will be back at our very own Warrington Irish Club for a very festive Christmas Special! A lovely full circle moment to end the year.

Come down and support if you can - this tour is going to be something special.

Tour dates below, and tickets available NOW on Skiddle!

Sat 11th April
Sat 23rd May
Sat 6th June
Sun 14th June
Sat 4th July
Sat 8th August
Fri 25th September
Sat 19th December

The Peer Hat, Manchester
Sidney and Matilda, Sheffield
The Attic, Leeds
Alexanders Live, Chester
Round the Corner, Liverpool
Dead Wax, Birmingham
93 Feet East, London
Warrington Irish Club
Christmas Special



Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

Not happy with the decision – Can I appeal?

Family court decisions can be life-changing. Whether they relate to children, finances or other family matters, it's understandable that people sometimes leave court feeling the outcome is unfair or wrong. But can a decision be appealed?

The short answer is maybe. It depends. There is no automatic right to appeal. Appealing a family court decision is not about simply disagreeing with the Judge. In almost every case there's usually at least one party who disagrees with the Judge. Appeals are tightly controlled and are only allowed where there is a proper legal basis.

The appeal court will not re-hear the case or reconsider the evidence just because one party is unhappy with the result. Instead, an appeal must be based on an error of law, a serious procedural irregularity, or a decision that falls outside the range of reasonable outcomes open to the Judge.

Timing is also critical. In most family cases an appeal must be started within 21 days of the decision being appealed. In some circumstances a shorter period may apply. In many situations, permission to appeal is required – either from the Judge who made the original decision or from the appeal court itself. This initial stage acts as a filter to ensure that only appeals with real merit proceed.

It is also important to consider the practical and emotional costs. Appeals can be expensive, stressful and time-consuming. In cases involving children, the court will be particularly concerned about delay and the impact further proceedings may have on them.

For these reasons, taking early advice is essential. Appealing a decision is not a step to be taken lightly. An experienced family law solicitor will be able to assess whether there are genuine grounds to appeal, explain the risks and prospects of success, and help you decide whether an appeal is the right step to take.

For expert advice and assistance regarding family law matters please get in touch – whatever your circumstances we have the experience and expertise to advise, guide and support you.

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Swim England backs Bid to Save Woolston Hub

SWIM England, the National Governing Body for swimming in England, has sent two reports to Warrington Borough Council in support of retaining Woolston Neighbourhood Hub.

They have dismissed the thinking that Warrington has a sufficient amount of water space available for public swimming.

Nationally, Swim England recommends a total of 12 square metres per 1000 population, based on a country-wide average. This means that Warrington should have just over 2500 square metres – increasing with the new houses due to be built in the near future.

However, including Woolston Neighbourhood Hub, and including two non-Livewire Community pools at Penketh and Lymm, Warrington only has a mere 2040 square metres – one large pool and one small pool away from the recommended figure.

Judy Brown, Co-chair of the Save Woolston Hub Campaign, commented: "The reports that Swim England have submitted to Warrington Borough Council are extremely important.

Warrington has more than its fair share of rivers and waterways, and is within an hour's drive of several coastal locations. It also has a strong sporting culture where swimming and rowing have always featured highly.

"We should be well above the National average !! However, even if Woolston is reopened, we

still need another Centre the size of Orford Jubilee to just about scramble over the average figure for now. The recent small pool closure at Orford underlines even further why Warrington simply cannot get away with such a small amount of pool space for such a large amount of people. There will soon be a new generation of Warringtonians who don't have basic swimming skills, leaving them at greater risk around water, and shutting off a whole range of water-based sporting activities that they might otherwise have participated in.

"The reports also cited that in 2022, swimming saved the National economy over £2.4 billion pounds (over £4.4 million per constituency), so quite apart from all the negative effects on Health and wellbeing, and all the misery this closure is causing, the maths of closure simply don't add up!"



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All profits support our charity work at Warrington Disability Partnership

Healthspan in 2026: What actually adds years to your life?

By Dr Stephen Coogan MBChB MRCP, Founder and CEO, myGP Clinic

We often talk about lifespan — how long we live. The more important question is healthspan — how long we remain well, independent and mentally sharp.

In Warrington, average life expectancy is around 79 years for men and 82 for women, broadly in line with national figures. However, healthy life expectancy — the years lived without significant illness or disability — is notably lower. Many people are living longer, but spending more of those later years coping with chronic disease.

The principal drivers are well established: cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and cognitive decline. These conditions do not appear overnight. They develop quietly over decades before symptoms emerge, often signalled only by gradual changes in blood pressure, cholesterol or glucose levels.

The encouraging truth is that much of this risk is measurable and modifiable — both across communities and at an individual level.

Muscle mass is one of the strongest predictors of healthy ageing. From our forties onwards, we naturally lose muscle unless we actively maintain it. Reduced muscle is linked to frailty, insulin resistance and loss of independence. Two to three sessions of resistance training

per week — alongside regular walking or aerobic activity — is not about appearance; it is about preserving strength, metabolic resilience and functional capacity into later life.

Metabolic health sits at the centre of disease prevention. Waist circumference, blood pressure, fasting glucose and cholesterol provide early warning of future cardiovascular risk. Improving these markers is rarely complicated: consistent physical activity, prioritising whole foods over ultra-processed options, moderating refined carbohydrates, maintaining adequate protein intake and sustaining a healthy body composition all improve insulin sensitivity and reduce inflammation. Even modest weight reduction can significantly lower blood pressure and improve glucose control.

Substance use remains a major determinant of healthspan. Smoking is still the leading preventable cause of premature death in the UK. Alcohol increases cancer risk even at relatively low levels, and recreational drugs carry both immediate and longer-term cardiovascular and mental health

consequences.

Sleep and stress are frequently underestimated. Chronic sleep deprivation disrupts metabolic regulation, raises blood pressure and drives inflammation. Persistent stress produces similar physiological effects through sustained cortisol elevation. Seven to eight hours of consistent, restorative sleep — alongside practical stress management — is protective.

Social connection and emotional wellbeing also matter. Strong relationships, community involvement and a sense of purpose are consistently linked with lower mortality and better mental health. Isolation and chronic emotional

strain carry measurable health risks.

Importantly, these habits begin early. Children who grow up active, eating well, emotionally supported and socially connected are more likely to carry those patterns into adulthood. Preventive health starts in childhood.

That said, it is never too late to change course. The body retains remarkable capacity to respond to improved nutrition, increased activity and smoking cessation, even later in life.

Longevity is not simply about adding years. It is about ensuring those years remain active, independent and purposeful.



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Sutton trust multisport Free

Age: 8–16 Time: Tuesday 4–5pm

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Age: 10–17 Time: Wednesday 4–5pm

Walking netball £5

Age: 16+ Time: Thursday 5–6pm

Junior cricket Free

Age: 9–16 Time: Thursday 5–6pm

Advanced walking football £5

Age: 18+ Time: Thursday 7:30–9pm

Box & brew £4

Age: 50+ Time: Friday 11:30–12:30pm

Family netball £2

Age: 8+ Time: Friday 6–7:30pm



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Mersey Forest donates 4,000 trees to Walton Hall Golf Course



THE Mersey Forest has donated 4,000 trees to enhance Warrington's Walton Hall Golf Course.

Planting will be done in phases to minimise disruption to the golf.

Once established, the new mixed-variety trees will form an integral part of Walton Hall's long term sustainability and environmental enhancement plans.

The Mersey Forest is Cheshire and Merseyside's community forest, creating and caring for a growing network of woodlands to benefit people, nature and the climate. This latest contribution reflects its long standing commitment to increasing tree cover, boosting biodiversity and creating greener, healthier landscapes for local communities.

The initiative began when local volunteer group Wild About Stockton Heath introduced The Mersey Forest to Walton Hall to explore opportunities for collaboration. A wide mix of native broadleaf species will be planted across selected areas of the estate.

They will not only strengthen local habitats and increase ecological diversity but will also contribute to improving the overall golfing experience. Carefully placed planting will enhance the visual

landscape, introduce new natural features, and help create a more varied and enjoyable course layout in harmony with the surrounding environment.

Students from Myerscough College will assist with planning and planting as part of their studies. Their involvement provides valuable hands on training and helps ensure that each tree is planted with long term woodland health in mind.

Warrington Borough Council's cabinet member for climate change, sustainability and the environment, Cllr Tony Higgins, said: "We are extremely grateful to The Mersey Forest for their generous donation and the expertise they bring to this project. These 4,000 new trees will deliver lasting environmental benefits by boosting biodiversity, while also subtly enhancing the character and experience of the course for golfers."

"We are equally pleased to be working alongside Myerscough College students, whose skills and enthusiasm will help bring this planting scheme to life."



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Birchwood Park marks 80 years at the heart of the UK's nuclear story

BIRCHWOOD Park in Warrington is marking a significant milestone this year, celebrating 80 years since the first meeting of the UK's atomic energy programme took place at the Risley site in a disused canteen.

That meeting, held on 4 February 1946 and led by Sir Christopher Hinton, later Lord, established the area as a focal point for nuclear coordination, design and innovation, bringing together an initial team of just 12 people tasked with designing, coordinating and delivering the UK's atomic energy programme.

From that moment, Risley became the design authority and heart of the nation's emerging nuclear infrastructure.

Over the following decades, teams based at Risley — now Birchwood Park — were responsible for the design, coordination and delivery of some of the most significant achievements in UK nuclear history, including the development of sites like Sellafield Springfields, and Capenhurst.

Eight decades on, Birchwood Park continues to play a central role in the UK nuclear sector.

Today, it brings together over 6,000 nuclear specialists from more than 30 organisations in one dedicated nuclear cluster, uniquely supporting activity across the entire nuclear lifecycle. From research and design through to operations, decommissioning and waste management, it is the

highest concentration of nuclear employment in the UK.

This enduring role and celebration comes at a time of renewed momentum for nuclear.

The North West remains the UK's leading nuclear region, with the sector forecast to grow by more than 8% annually and employment expected to increase by almost 50% by 2030, according to new figures highlighted by the Northern Nuclear Alliance in its Nuclear Week in Parliament 2026 paper.

From post-war reactor design to modern clean energy technologies, Birchwood Park's story reflects the evolution of the UK's nuclear industry itself — combining long-standing engineering excellence with collaboration and innovation that continue to shape the sector's future.

Martin O'Rourke, Commercial Director at Birchwood Park, said: "This anniversary is a reminder that Birchwood Park has never been a peripheral site in the UK's nuclear story — it has been central to it for eight decades.

"For many people, that story is personal — with second and third generations of families building their careers here. As the sector looks ahead, that continuity of

skills and experience remains just as important as the innovation shaping the future.

"With increased investment and demand for nuclear skills, our focus is on ensuring Birchwood Park, in partnership with the Northern Nuclear Alliance (NNA), continues to enable collaboration, innovation and long-term growth — not just for the North West, but for the UK's energy future."

The North West is home to the UK's most comprehensive

nuclear ecosystem, including the Northern Nuclear Alliance, Amentum, Cavendish Nuclear, Rolls-Royce, The UK National Nuclear Laboratory and a globally recognised nuclear supply chain.

Together, the region hosts almost 50% of the UK's nuclear research and innovation activity, reinforcing its position as a cornerstone of the country's nuclear ambitions.

To find out more, visit: www.birchwoodpark.co.uk/80-years-of-nuclear



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Spotlight on Local History with James Balme

A Visit to the ancient manor of the Mainwarings of Over Peover



Warrington is a town steeped in history dating back to the earliest times. Indeed, throughout the centuries members of the Mainwaring family were prominent landowners across Cheshire including owning land in Warrington.

But travel just thirty minutes to the south east of Warrington and you will find yourself in Over Peover once the manor held from the 13th century by the Mainwaring family who were lords of the estate.

Peover Hall that we see today was first built in 1585 by Sir Randle Mainwaring. This beautiful Elizabethan house remained the ancestral home to the Mainwarings for almost 340 years before it was sold to a private buyer in 1919. Today the hall is a family home but is open to the public on selected days of the week.

But the story of the Mainwarings goes back much further and many believe this influential Cheshire family had its roots in Cheshire from as early as the Norman conquest. The family themselves claimed that they were descended from Sir Ralph de Mesnilwarin born in 1155 AD who was to become the Justice of Chester in later life.

Next to Peover Hall stands the ancient church of St Lawrence believed to have been first built in the reign of King Edward III between 1327 to 1377. This beautiful church only a stones' throw away from Peover Hall became the burial place of the Mainwarings from as early as 1410 AD. Inside this building stand the alabaster and marble tombs from many generations of the Mainwaring family and they are believed to be some of the finest examples in Cheshire revered by historians since at least the 18th century.

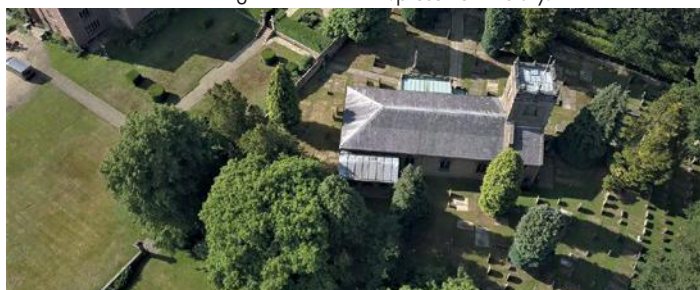
Historical records show that in 1456 Sir Randle Mainwaring died and was buried in the churchyard, however his wife Margery decided that she wanted something so much

more special to remember him by and she duly commissioned a chapel to be built over his grave on the south side of the church. This was completed and today if you visit St Lawrence's church you will see a resplendent canopied tomb inside the church complete with carved stone effigies of Randle and Margery lay side by side.

But the jewel in the crown of this wonderful ancient building has to be the north chapel housing the marble tomb-chest of Sir Philip Mainwaring and his wife Ellen for it is here where we find not only the beautifully carved effigies of the couple but also weapons and armour believed to have belonged to Sir Philip having been worn by him during his life. Today these are to be found mounted on the walls of his chapel. Also suspended above the tomb-chest are relics from the English civil war including helmets and armour.

But St Lawrence's will always be proud that the late General George Patton of the American Third Army and his staff worshipped at the church in 1944 during the time that they occupied Peover Hall. Today you can see the American flag presented by General Patton to the church mounted on the wall alongside a bronze plaque and two photographs of the General. Over Peover has certainly played its part in British history from the 14th century right through to today.

My film, The Mainwarings and St Lawrence, shot at Over Peover, can be viewed for free with many other local history films by visiting my channel, [youtube.com/@Tvpresenter4history](https://www.youtube.com/@Tvpresenter4history).

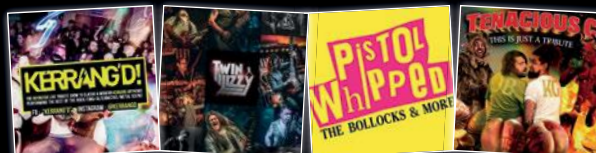


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Are You Missing Out on Pension Tax Relief?

Many taxpayers assume that when they pay into a pension, the tax system automatically gives them all the relief they are entitled to. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Every year, higher and additional rate taxpayers overpay tax simply because they never claim the extra pension relief available to them.

For most employees, pension contributions are paid from income that has already been taxed. The pension provider then adds basic rate tax relief at 20% automatically. While this works perfectly for basic rate taxpayers, it only gives part of the benefit to anyone paying tax at 40% or 45%. The remaining relief does not appear unless the taxpayer actively claims it. If no claim is made, HMRC keeps the difference.

The confusion mainly comes from the different ways pension schemes apply tax relief. Many personal pensions and workplace schemes operate under what is called a relief at source method. Under this arrangement, the individual pays a net contribution and the provider claims 20% from HMRC to top it up. However, that is where the process stops. Higher rate relief is

not automatically added, even though the taxpayer is entitled to it.

By contrast, some schemes operate through payroll using a net pay arrangement or salary sacrifice. In these cases contributions are deducted before tax is calculated, meaning full relief is given automatically. The difficulty is that people rarely know which system their pension uses, and many assume all schemes work the same way.

The financial difference can be substantial. A higher rate taxpayer contributing £10,000 into a relief at source pension would personally pay £8,000 and the provider would add £2,000 basic rate relief. However, a further £2,000 of higher rate relief is still due. If it is not claimed, that money simply remains with HMRC instead of being refunded or reducing the tax bill. Over several years, especially for business owners or senior employees making regular contributions, this can amount to many thousands of pounds.

Different routes to relief

Another common misunderstanding is that a full tax return must be completed to recover the relief. In reality there are two routes available.

Individuals who already complete a return can include the pension contributions within it and HMRC will adjust the calculation accordingly. Those who do not normally file a return can instead submit a standalone claim through HMRC's online service, which is often quicker and avoids additional administrative obligations.

To make a claim, HMRC requires basic supporting information such as the taxpayer's National Insurance number, the pension provider details and the total contributions made in each tax year. Evidence is also needed in the form of a pension statement, letter from the provider or payslip showing the contribution and confirmation that basic rate relief has been applied. Once processed, HMRC usually either repays the tax or adjusts the tax code so less tax is paid in the future.

This issue is becoming increasingly important as pension taxation grows more complex and responsibility shifts towards individuals ensuring the correct relief is received. Future changes are expected to limit how much relief is automatically applied within certain contribution arrangements, meaning



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

more taxpayers will need to actively reclaim the difference rather than relying on payroll adjustments.

For anyone earning above the basic rate threshold and contributing to a pension that is not salary sacrifice, a quick review is worthwhile. It is also possible to claim relief for previous tax years, meaning refunds are often available even if the oversight has been ongoing for some time.

Pensions remain one of the most tax efficient savings vehicles available, but only when the relief is fully obtained. In many cases the system provides 20% automatically and leaves the rest unclaimed unless action is taken. A simple check can therefore produce a valuable repayment while improving long term retirement savings at the same time.

In short, do not assume the tax system has already done the work for you. Making sure the relief has been claimed properly can make a meaningful difference to both current tax bills and future retirement income.

WatkinsonBlack have considerable experience in all areas of taxation and business services. This includes providing a very cost-effective **payroll bureau service**, as well as assisting to ensure compliance with the latest **Making Tax Digital** legislation. If you are **employed or self-employed** either as a sole trader, partnership or limited company and want to arrange a **no-obligation initial meeting on any taxation or accounting matter** then please contact us by telephone on **01925 413210** or by e-mail to **info@watkinsonblack.com**. Please note that these ideas are intended to inform rather than advise and you should always obtain professional advice before taking any action.

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Emma, one of the college's talented Level 3 students, said: "My tutors make me feel like family. I have learnt so much on the course and would definitely recommend studying bricklaying to anyone."

Michael Gibbons, Lecturer in Brickwork at Warrington & Vale Royal College, said: "I'm incredibly proud of the standard of work our Level 3 Bricklaying students are producing. Their commitment, skill, and attention to detail reflect the

expectations of the industry, and it's fantastic to see them pushing themselves to achieve such high-quality results."

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