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ISSUE 323 NOVEMBER 2026 FREE EVERY MONTH

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Printed by TwentyFourSeven

Editor's Opinion

A sold-out event at the Halliwell Jones Stadium has proved that sometimes a fresh approach, a new identity and a strong sense of local pride are exactly what is needed to bring people together.

There is something rather special about bringing Warrington's business community together under the same roof as one of the town's greatest sporting institutions.

And when both are celebrating 150 years of history, there is even more reason to raise a glass.

The relaunched and rebranded Warrington Chamber Plus event, held at the Halliwell Jones Stadium, has been a tremendous success, attracting a sold-out audience and providing a fitting celebration of two organisations that have played such an important part in the town's story.

The Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Warrington Wolves have more in common than might first appear.

Both have deep roots in our town. Both have weathered changing times. Both understand that success is built on commitment, resilience, teamwork and the willingness to look ahead rather than simply dwell on past glories. And both have helped put Warrington on the map.

For the Chamber, 150 years represents generations of businesses, entrepreneurs and employers contributing to the local economy, creating jobs and helping shape the town we know today. For the Wolves, it represents a proud sporting heritage, passionate supporters and a club that remains firmly embedded in Warrington's identity. Bringing those two stories together was a clever move. Turning that idea into a sold-out event demonstrates the appetite for something fresh in Warrington's business calendar.

Business networking events have their place, but they need to offer more than a room full of people exchanging business cards and hoping for the best.

They need atmosphere, personality and a reason for people to want to attend.

The Halliwell Jones Stadium provided the perfect backdrop, bringing together the commercial and sporting sides of Warrington in a way that felt both natural and distinctly local.

That is what Warrington Chamber Plus should be about: creating opportunities, building relationships and reminding businesses that they are part of something bigger than their own individual organisations. A successful relaunch is not simply about changing a name or refreshing an event. It is about creating renewed enthusiasm, attracting new audiences and giving people a reason to come back. This event appears to have done exactly that.

Business Awards celebrate town's finest in landmark 150th anniversary year

Warrington's outstanding businesses, entrepreneurs, employers and community organisations have been celebrated at a sold-out Warrington Chamber Plus Business Awards 2026, held at the Halliwell Jones Stadium.

The glittering awards evening brought together the town's business community to recognise achievement, innovation and dedication, while marking a remarkable double anniversary year for both Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Warrington Wolves, which are each celebrating 150 years.

Hosted by broadcaster and performer Jo Lloyd from Smooth FM, the event recognised the people and organisations helping to drive Warrington's economy, support local communities and create opportunities for the future.

The evening also raised £1,700 for the Warrington Wolves Foundation through a raffle, providing a welcome boost for the charitable work of the club's foundation.

Chamber chair Paul Taylor congratulated all those shortlisted and recognised the importance of celebrating success across the local business community.

He said: "These awards celebrate the outstanding businesses, entrepreneurs, employers, charities and emerging talent that drive our local economy and make Warrington such a vibrant place to live, work and do business.

"Congratulations to all our finalists. Whatever the outcome, you are all winners in demonstrating innovation, resilience and commitment to our community."

Warrington Chamber Plus Business Awards 2026 winners:

Young Person of the Year
James Mercer – Sellafield
Sponsored by Pete Pinnington Productions.

Charity of the Year
More Than Together
Sponsored by Barrow Electrical.

Entrepreneur of the Year
Rebecca Dutton-Geraghty – Safe & Snappy
Sponsored by The Causeway.

Employer of the Year
Adele Carr Recruitment
Sponsored by NatWest Bank.

Businessman of the Year
Andrew Unsworth - Wire Cranes
Sponsored by KNEKT business

Businesswoman of the Year
Siobhan McCarroll – Dunkys Day Nurseries
Sponsored by Platform.

Small Business of the Year
Wire Cranes
Sponsored by Obi Property.

Outstanding Achievement Award
Laurence Barrow – Barrow Electrical Ltd
Sponsored by Watsons Solicitors.

Contribution to Business Award
Mike Lomax – Total Steel
Selected by the Chamber Board and sponsored by Taylor Estates.

Lifetime Achievement Award
Charles Hewitt – Rock Oil
Selected by the Chamber Board and sponsored by Greenalls.

Business of the Year
Labdesk
Sponsored by Sellafield Ltd.

The awards provided an opportunity to recognise the breadth of talent, enterprise and community commitment across Warrington, from emerging young professionals and ambitious entrepreneurs to established businesses and individuals whose contributions have helped shape the local economy.

The 2026 celebrations carried additional significance as Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Warrington Wolves marked 150 years of history, achievement and service to the town.

With a packed event, a celebration of local success and £1,700 raised for the Warrington Wolves Foundation, the evening underlined the strength of the connections between Warrington's business community, its charitable organisations and its sporting heritage.

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists who helped make the Warrington Chamber Plus Business Awards 2026 a memorable celebration of the town's achievements.

'Tidy Streets' initiative finally gets off the ground

A community-led campaign to encourage businesses to keep Warrington's shopping streets clean and tidy has officially been launched, with nine businesses signing up within its first 24 hours.

The "Warrington's Litter Heroes" window sticker scheme aims to encourage businesses to take greater pride in the appearance of their premises and the surrounding streets.

The initiative was originally proposed by Dr Tony Dixon, who discussed the idea with Cllr Mo Hussain, who subsequently agreed to spearhead the project.

Cllr Hussain had hoped to launch the scheme during his mayoral year, but it failed to materialise at the time.

Now, alongside the current Mayor of Warrington, Cllr Sageer Zaman, the long-awaited initiative has finally become a reality.

They were joined at the launch by Dr Dixon and Bob Towers, a volunteer who has played a key role in getting the scheme off the ground.

The initiative is being led by Warrington Litter Volunteers, recipients of the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service, with support from Warrington Borough Council.

The scheme is voluntary, with participating businesses displaying a bright green "Warrington's Litter Heroes" sticker in their windows.

In return, businesses make a pledge to keep the front and rear of their premises tidy and take pride in the surrounding area.

There are no contracts, fines or enforcement measures attached to the scheme. Instead, it relies on businesses taking responsibility for their immediate surroundings and working collectively to improve the appearance of the town.

The campaign's organisers believe even small individual efforts can make a noticeable difference to the look and feel of Warrington's shopping streets.

The initial response has been encouraging, with nine businesses and organisations joining within the first 24 hours of the launch.

They are:

- Warrington Irish Club
- Tax Assists Accountants
- AD Car Spares
- Cat Rescue
- Express Coffee
- Co-op
- William Hill
- Class Fade Barbers
- Best One Mini Market

Cllr Hussain said: "This is something Dr Tony Dixon and I spoke about some time back. I was keen to lead it during my mayoral year, but it wasn't the right time then.

"I'm so pleased we've got it off the ground now. It's about businesses taking ownership, saying, 'This is our street, and we want it to shine.'"

Mayor Cllr Zaman added: "This is community spirit in action. It's wonderful to see it finally launched and to see businesses embracing it so warmly."

Mr Towers, who has helped drive the project forward, said volunteers were already making a difference across the town several days a week.

He said: "Our volunteers are out several days each week, making a difference. This scheme gives local businesses a simple, positive way to join us and, together, we'll make Warrington cleaner and prouder.

"Through this scheme, we're keen to generate greater levels of pride in our shopfronts, pride in our neighbourhoods and communities, and ultimately, pride in our town.

"This is about everyone playing their part. A small commitment from a business can make a real difference to the look and feel of an entire street."

Dr Dixon, a Keep Britain Tidy ambassador, said the initiative had grown from an idea shared between friends into a community project.

He added: "From an idea between friends to a real community movement, this shows what we can do when we work together. Every sticker is a statement that we care."

Volunteers will be visiting further businesses across Warrington over the coming month to encourage them to join the scheme.

Businesses wishing to take part are being invited to come forward and collect a sticker.

The organisers hope the initiative will help foster greater pride in shopfronts and neighbourhoods, encouraging businesses and residents to work together towards cleaner and more welcoming streets across Warrington.

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Spotlight on Local Business

New Vibe Cafe opens supporting young people into work and education

A new cafe aimed at helping young people take their next steps into employment, education and training has launched in Warrington town centre.

The Vibe Cafe is designed to support young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), providing a welcoming place to meet other young people, connect with local employers and explore educational opportunities.

Carl Oates, from Platform Data Centres, attended the launch alongside Sharon Jenkins and Louise Berry from Warrington Borough Council.

Carl said: "Vibe Cafe is aimed at supporting 'NEETs' across Warrington.

"People aged 16-24 who might be struggling to find work or integrate into society can go to Vibe Cafe, meet other young people; meet local employers and meet local educational providers.

"I'm delighted that Platform can support the launch of the Vibe Cafe and we'll be employing young, local people ourselves next year."

The initiative aims to provide a link between young people who may be struggling to find their direction and the organisations, employers and education providers that can help them move forward.

By creating an informal environment where young people can make connections and explore opportunities, the cafe hopes to help overcome some of the barriers they face when trying to access work, training or further education.

Platform Data Centres is involved in the development and operation of data centre infrastructure, supporting the digital services and technology that businesses and organisations rely on.

Its support for the Vibe Cafe reflects a wider opportunity for businesses investing in the area to engage with the local community and help create pathways into employment.

The Vibe Cafe also fits with the wider aim of helping people improve their wellbeing, confidence and independence through community-based support.

Warrington's Living Well approach includes connecting people with advice, activities and services that can help them manage challenges and improve their quality of life. Community hubs and similar initiatives can provide accessible points of contact, helping people find the right support before difficulties become more entrenched.

For young people who feel isolated or uncertain about their future, having somewhere welcoming to go and opportunities to meet peers and professionals could be an important first step.

The launch brings together business and local authority support around a shared objective: helping more young people in Warrington access opportunities and build a positive future.

The Living Well Hub, at Horsemarket Street, also brings together NHS, council and voluntary-sector services, offering health and wellbeing advice, mental health support and help for families and carers.

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EMR named North West Large Apprenticeship Employer of the Year

WARRINGTON-based EMR has been awarded The Large Apprenticeship Employer of the Year Award, ahead of fellow finalists Manchester Airports Group, EG Group and Lancashire County Council.

The recognition follows several years of sustained investment in apprenticeships across EMR, with the number of apprentices growing from just eight in 2021 to 90 in 2026.

"We've grown significantly since 2021, but what matters most is why we've grown. We are using apprenticeships to develop the skills our business needs, create opportunities for our people and prepare for the future.

"This award belongs to everyone who has helped make that possible – our apprentices, their managers, our apprenticeship team and the colleagues who give their time and experience to help others develop." said Tom Russell, Head of People Capability at EMR.

EMR's apprenticeship programmes are built around the needs of the business, bringing new people into the industry while giving existing colleagues opportunities to learn new skills, gain qualifications and progress their careers. The impact can already be seen. Colleagues who undertake an apprenticeship with EMR stay with the business, on average, twice as long as those who do not. Women also make up 38 per cent of colleagues currently on apprenticeship programmes, a significantly higher proportion than across EMR's wide workforce, highlighting how apprenticeships are helping create more opportunities for women in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Programmes such as EMR's Commercial Apprentice Programme combine technical knowledge with practical experience, while apprentices also have opportunities to learn from suppliers, other businesses and one another.

EMR will now progress to the National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards 2026 final in London, where regional winners from across England will compete for national recognition.

The National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards are now in their 23rd year and recognise leading employers, apprentices, T Level students and skills champions from across England.

Spotlight on Local Business

A few weeks to remember, and plenty more to fight for

By Laurence Barrow

The last few weeks have been a real whirlwind, with incredible events, humbling recognition and reminders of why supporting our local community means so much to me.

One highlight was the Warrington Chamber Plus Business Awards at the Halliwell Jones Stadium. Barrow Electrical was runner-up for Business of the Year, and I was runner-up for Businessman of the Year. To then receive the Outstanding Achievement Award was incredibly humbling. Being recognised for our work and local impact means a great deal, and I'm absolutely chuffed to bits.

I was also honoured to receive the Chair's Award at the North West Cancer Research Awards at Liverpool's Titanic Hotel for the amazing Golf event back in July, It was an evening filled with inspirational stories and hope for future research and treatments across our region.

Sadly, we recently lost our friend Maria to brain cancer at just 42. With Claire also undergoing a new treatment for her brain cancer, these causes are incredibly close to home. Claire has faced a few difficult weeks adjusting to treatment, but she's doing amazingly. We feel fortunate to have brilliant hospitals and medical teams around us, and I'm determined to do even more for North West Cancer Research in Maria's memory.

Meeting Andy Reid MBE, the inspirational triple amputee who completed the London Marathon and climbed Kilimanjaro, was another privilege. Meanwhile, our Barrow Electrical and AI Lighting teams have returned safely from their own Kilimanjaro challenge, raising more than £20,000 for MamaToto. We're incredibly proud of everyone involved.

We were proud to sponsor the Dave Rees Gala Dinner at Wigan's Brick Community Stadium for Wigan and Leigh Hospice. Dave gave Barrow Electrical the opportunity to work on one of our biggest projects, something we'll always be grateful for. Our relationship with the team at Vanliners UK remains fantastic.

On the golfing front, we won the Protive Security Warrington and Halton Hospitals Charity Golf Day for the second year running. I even managed to win the Kia Invitational at Trentham Golf Club with a brilliant team around me. I'll put that down to luck, as I certainly don't expect it to become a habit!

It's been rewarding helping launch the new Vibe Cafe at Warrington Living Well Hub, speaking with young people about employment and training opportunities, and supporting Parr Hall's OktoberFest for Warrington's Rotary club.

It was a huge honour speaking at ABB's leadership conference and then attending the World Grand Prix darts final in Leicester as a VIP guest of BoyleSports, following our team's work setting up the Mattioli Arena.

Behind the scenes, Barrow Electrical continues delivering projects across storage, manufacturing, healthcare and education, alongside our nationwide compliance rollout and work in the Republic of Ireland. The team continue to smash it out of the park.

At Warrington Rylands, keep an eye out for the club's October event with Cash for Kids — another brilliant initiative supporting our community.

Finally, the North West Cancer Research Golf Day returns on Friday 21 May 2027 at Fairmont Cheshire, The Mere. We're planning to make it bigger and better, with exciting announcements coming soon. Whether you'd like to play golf, attend the evening gala or get involved as a sponsor, please contact me directly. We'd love to have you involved!

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Murder at Mistletoe Hall promises festive fun and mystery

As part of their 75th Anniversary Season, the Bridgewater Players Drama Society will be putting on a heartwarming, festive murder mystery, 'Murder at Mistletoe Hall', which is another play written and directed by one of their members, Anna Fradgley.

It is 23rd December 1951 and the Blackwell family are gathering at Mistletoe Hall to celebrate Lord Blackwell's birthday on Christmas Eve. But when he is found dead in his study, with the telephone lines dead and the house cut off by a blizzard, everyone becomes a suspect. There is also an added complication, Lord Blackwell's mistress, Grace De Venables, arrives unannounced. Family secrets are revealed, old rivalries reignite and nothing is quite as it first appears.

The play combines the intrigue of Agatha Christie with the festive fun of a family Christmas. "I want the audience to feel like they are having Agatha Christie over for Christmas to play a fun game of Cluedo or charades!" said Anna. "By the end of the show, we will all be in the festive spirit!"

The play is set in 1951, which is the year the society was initially formed by six people in Lymm and this is their 75th anniversary year. Other shows planned for this anniversary season is Ken Ludwig's screw-ball comedy of mistaken identity, "Lend Me A Soprano", on 25th to 27th February and a hilarious farce, 'Hello, Is There Any Body There?' by Ian Hornby, on 22nd to 24th April.

If you are planning to see all three shows, why not purchase a season ticket for £25.50? You will be seated in the first few rows, benefit from a lower ticket price and you will help support the society.

The show dates for 'Murder at Mistletoe Hall' are Thursday 26th, Friday 27th and Saturday 28th November. Doors open at 7.15pm with curtains up at 7.45pm, prompt. Tickets for each show can be purchased online at www.bwplayers.co.uk/tickets

Price is £9, plus booking fee online, and £10 on the door. Pre-booking is highly recommended. Performed at Thelwall Parish Hall, Bell Lane, WA4 2SX. Free parking is available. Free tea, coffee and biscuits will be served in the interval and soft drinks and alcoholic beverages are available to purchase from the bar. A raffle will be drawn in the interval. Please email for season tickets and with any disability requirements on bridgewaterplayers@gmail.com

Picture by Jorube Portrait Photography

Youth theatre group celebrates nine Northern Stage Awards

Warrington-based CODYS Youth Theatre is celebrating after scooping nine awards at this year's Northern Stage Awards, recognising its performances and behind-the-scenes talent.

The group received an impressive 37 shortlisted nominations for its productions of The SpongeBob Musical and Musicality, before taking home nine awards on the night against youth musical theatre groups from across the North West.

Among the winners was Joseph Hampson, who was named Best Leading Youth Male Character in a Musical for his portrayal of SpongeBob, while Lily Loftus won Best Leading Youth Female in a Musical for her role as Sandy in The SpongeBob Musical.

The production also won Best Ensemble Performance in a Musical for Eden Cannon, Lily Rowen, Emma Thompson and Zak Harrison, who performed as The Electric Skates.

Eden Cannon received the Polaris Star Award for Musicals for her work in The SpongeBob Musical, while Emily Woodward was named Best Musical Director.

The production's props team was also recognised, winning Best Props on the Northern Stage. The award celebrated the work of Melanie Pollard, Martin Pollard, Connie Pollard, Rachel Hampson, Emma Hampson, Shell Taylor and Reggi Hennessey.

There was further success for Musicality, with Elizabeth Usher winning the Electra Star Award for Drama and Revues, while Sam Grimes received the Polaris Star Award for Drama and Revues.

Musicality also won Best Essential Information Programme.

A spokesperson for CODYS said: "It is an absolute honour to have our cast and crew recognised for their hard work on our shows over the last year and we are incredibly proud of every single CODYS member that took part, whether on the stage or behind the scenes.

"Huge thanks to The Northern Stage Awards for everything."

The awards success comes as the Warrington youth theatre looks ahead to its next production, Les Misérables: School Edition.

The show will be performed at The Brindley Theatre from March 10-13, 2027, with tickets on sale now through the Brindley box office.

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Wolves Foundation help kick-start cancer screening conversations

Warrington Wolves are helping put cancer screening conversations at the heart of the community as the 'Two Minutes of Chat & An Early Screening' campaign continues to have an impact across Halton, Warrington and St Helens.

Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance's Two Minutes of Chat and an Early Screening campaign was created to tackle one of the barriers to early cancer diagnosis – people not always having conversations about cancer screening until it may be too late.

The campaign has moved beyond traditional raising awareness, with local organisations using campaign materials, events and activities to encourage people to talk openly about cancer screening with friends, family and their communities.

At the heart of the Warrington activity has been Warrington Wolves Community Foundation, Warrington Wolves have continued to take the message directly into their community – sharing campaign resources through their community programmes, bringing screening conversations to their Yoga on the Pitch event and engaging members of their Pow-Her of the Pack women's group.

And it is not just Warrington Wolves getting involved.

All 11 LiveWire libraries across Warrington are now showing campaign materials, which also feature on screens across Warrington's leisure centres, Warrington Market, 1 Time Square and Warrington's Own Buses.

Across the wider campaign, organisations have been using conversation starters, pledge boards, affirmation cards, quizzes, posters, social media assets and 'Campaign in a Box' materials to bring the conversations into their own activities.

This has included community coffee mornings, wellbeing events, primary care settings, libraries, leisure centres, local sports networks and community venues.

So far, the campaign has:
- been seen more than 6 million times on buses
- been seen more than 465,000 times across Facebook and Instagram
- had more than 12,500 people visited the campaign website
- had 662 pledged conversations through the campaign platform
- started over 100 conversations already in St Helens
- started hundreds of conversations through Warrington community outreach
- engaged over 100 organisations across the campaignFind Cancer Care

Warrington's Own Buses has extended its support beyond the original campaign, with advertising now running across 34 buses and generating more than 6 million opportunities to be seen.

In Warrington, the campaign is now present across transport, sport, libraries, leisure, primary care, community organisations and local media.

A huge thank you also goes to all the interviewees who have shared their personal stories and experiences so openly, inspirationally and bravely in support of the campaign. By sharing their experiences, they have helped make conversations around cancer screening feel more real, relatable and accessible to others in their communities.

By bringing the campaign into the places where people already live, work, socialise and spend time, the campaign is making cancer screening a more visible and accessible part of everyday conversation.

The campaign's ambition is simple: two minutes of chat could help start a conversation that leads to an early screening – and potentially an earlier diagnosis.

Soup Productions wins at Northern Stage Awards

Warrington-based theatre company Soup Productions is celebrating following the first-ever Northern Stage Awards, which recognise talent and show success within local amateur dramatics.

Soup walked away with 6 NSA Awards; including: Best Leading Male in a pantomime, Best Leading Female performance in a drama, Best Supporting Male in a pantomime, Best Enchanted Character in a Pantomime and the Next Generation Award. Soup also won the prestigious Best Drama Award for 'Off Track' – a play set at Warrington Central train station, which was well-attended and received critical acclaim for its commentary on modern themes. Soup also received a total 32 award nominations, including several for 'The House, The Boys & The Trial' – another drama based on Warrington history, originally commissioned as part of Warrington Pride.

Soup returned to performing following the pandemic and has spent the last few years raising its profile and showing sharing the importance of creating original stories within the community. We are proud of all of our members, creatives and audiences who have supported us. It feels amazing to receive such recognition and to see that we are making a difference.

Despite the wins, Soup Productions shows no signs of slowing down, with its forthcoming pantomime – 'The Christmas Heist' – on its way and then a fantastic variety of shows in 2027, celebrating Soup's 10-year anniversary.

To find out more about Soup Productions follow www.facebook.com/soupproductionswarrington

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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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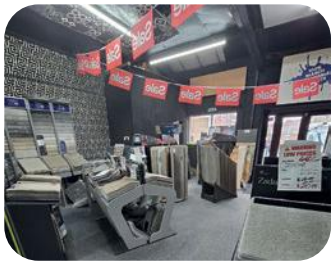

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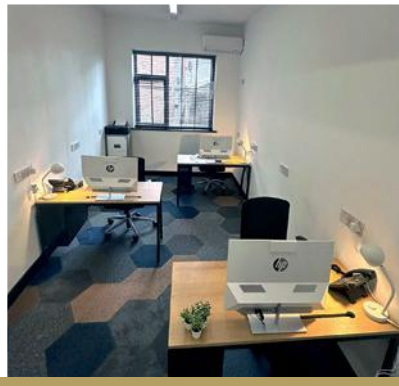

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Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

Chatbot Lawyers – Can You Trust Them?

Artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming the first port of call for people with legal questions. If you are separating, divorcing or facing any family law problem, it can be tempting to ask an AI chatbot where you stand. Within seconds, you may receive a confident answer about your home, finances or arrangements for your children. It's easy to see the attraction. But how much confidence should you place in the reply?

The obvious concern is accuracy. AI can get the law wrong and produce "hallucinations": false or invented information presented as fact. These might include a court case that never existed or an inaccurate reference to a court rule or practice direction. An answer can sound authoritative even when it's wrong.

But there is a less obvious danger: content and context. The answer you receive depends on the question you ask and the information you provide.

When describing your circumstances, you naturally include what you think matters. But what matters to you and what is legally relevant may not be the same thing. Equally, something you consider insignificant may be legally relevant and make a substantial difference to the advice.

Leave out a crucial detail and you may receive an answer that is accurate for the situation you have described, but misleading when applied to your actual circumstances.

Details, background and context matter. A chatbot's answer may sound tailored to you while resting on an incomplete picture.

An experienced family lawyer will ask questions before offering advice, identifying missing information, examining documents and recognising issues you may not have realised were relevant.

AI can be useful, provided you know how to use it and check its output. Its apparent certainty can be dangerous. It may reinforce your preferred interpretation, encouraging unrealistic expectations or decisions based on a mistaken understanding.

Before making decisions about your financial future, home or children, take advice from an experienced family lawyer. There is no substitute for advice that takes account of your particular circumstances.

For expert family law advice from a human being, please get in touch.

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Spotlight on Local History with James Balme

Murder in the name of the King - The Bloodshed of Barthomley

Thirty miles to the south of Warrington deep in the heart of Cheshire and close to the border of Shropshire is the stunningly beautiful village of Barthomley. Mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 AD the village was referred to as Bertemleu.

The village had strong links with the Crewe family from the 14th century onwards and it was Ranulph Crewe who built Crewe hall between 1615 to 1636 just two and a half miles away.

But it was the tragic events of Christmas 1643 that was to put the village of Barthomley into the pages of history and today the village is remembered for what became known as the 'Barthomley Massacre'.

Standing on high ground known as Barrow Hill and overlooking the village is an ancient church dedicated to St Bertoline, an 8th century prince who became a hermit following the death of his beautiful wife.

A Norman church was believed to have stood on this site built by the lords of the manor during the 12th century before being rebuilt again during the 15th century, however today all that remains of the Norman church is a Norman doorway reconstructed into the church during the 19th century.

But it's the church tower built in the late 15th century that tells an horrific story of massacre that took place here and carried out by Royalist troops during the English Civil War.

It was a cold day on the eve of Christmas 1643 when Royalist troops entered the village after plundering the surrounding countryside. Twenty men from the village took refuge in the church in the hope of gaining protection from the troops, however Major Connought and his Royalist men took control of the church. In blind panic the twenty men took to the tower and steeple climbing high up in the hope of escaping the soldiers. Immediately the troops began to pile up benches, mats, rushes and anything flammable that they could lay their hands upon and placed these at base of the tower. These were quickly lit and within minutes thick smoke began to bellow upwards into the tower where the twenty villagers were hiding. The men began to plead for their lives as the smoke and flames rose ever higher. Major Connought decided that the men could come down safely and they duly descended the tower, however once Connought had control of the twenty men he stripped them naked before putting twelve of them to the sword murdering them in cold blood, this was against the laws of Arms and Nations.

But Major Connought didn't stop there and not only did he slit the throat of one Mr John Fowler he then took his troops back into the village to plunder for the following two days.

At the end of the Civil war this tragic event wasn't forgotten and had King Charles decided to plead at his trial at Westminster Hall then the events here at Barthomley would most certainly have been one of the charges brought against the King. There's no doubt that the events that took place here in 1643 reflect a very dark period in British history.

If you visit St Bertoline's church for yourself then make sure that you take a look inside for it is here that you will find the Crewe chapel built by Sir Ranulph Crewe in 1608. Inside the chapel you will find stone effigies and tombs dating from the 14th, 16th and 19th centuries. My film, Murder in the name of the King, shot at Barthomley can be viewed for free with many other local history films by visiting my channel, youtube.com/@Tvpresenter4history.

Breathing Easy: Warrington's Revolutionary One-Stop Lung Health Clinic

Axis *core* Health

Stop struggling. Get answers in just one visit

If you've been battling a persistent cough, feeling short of breath during everyday activities, or simply worried about your lung health, you're not alone. Thousands of people across Warrington are affected by breathing issues that impact their work, exercise, sleep, and quality of life.
The frustration? Waiting months for specialist appointments, juggling multiple visits, and leaving without clear answers. That's about to change.

Expert Respiratory Care – All in One Visit

The Respiratory Wellness Clinic at Axis Core Health in Burtonwood has reimagined how lung health assessment works. Forget the traditional model of waiting weeks between appointments. Here, a dedicated team of respiratory specialists team works together to assess, investigate, and explain your results – all during a single visit.
Led by Consultant Respiratory Physician Dr Abdul Ashish, the clinic brings together:

- A specialist respiratory physiologist who measures lung function and offers a variety of other tests
- An experienced Respiratory physiotherapist who evaluates breathing patterns and physical performance to help you understand your breathing issues.

What You Can Expect

During your appointment, advanced diagnostic testing provides clarity:

- Spirometry or other breathing tests– assesses your lung function and breathing capacity
- Comprehensive breathing assessment by phsiotherapist– identifies factors contributing to your symptoms or reduced fitness
- Comprehensive analysis and plan by an experienced respiratory consultant

The results? You leave the clinic with a clear understanding of your condition, personalised advice tailored to your goals, and a concrete plan for managing your health moving forward.
What makes the clinic different is its coordinated, same-day approach. Test results are reviewed and interpreted by the respiratory team, allowing you to leave with a clearer understanding of your condition, personalised advice and recommendations for ongoing management.

Whether you are seeking reassurance, investigating symptoms, improving fitness, or taking a proactive approach to your health, the Respiratory Wellness Clinic offers expert respiratory care in a welcoming and convenient setting.

Why Warrington Residents Are Choosing This Clinic

- No waiting weeks between appointments – everything happens in one comprehensive visit
- Expert team approach – benefit from coordinated specialist knowledge
- Same-day results interpretation – leave with clear answers, not confusion
- Welcoming, convenient setting right here in Burtonwood

Your Next Step

If breathing better and regaining confidence in your health sounds appealing, the Respiratory Wellness Clinic at Axis Core Health in Burtonwood is ready to help.

Contact the clinic today to book your one-stop respiratory assessment. Get the expert care you deserve – without the long wait.

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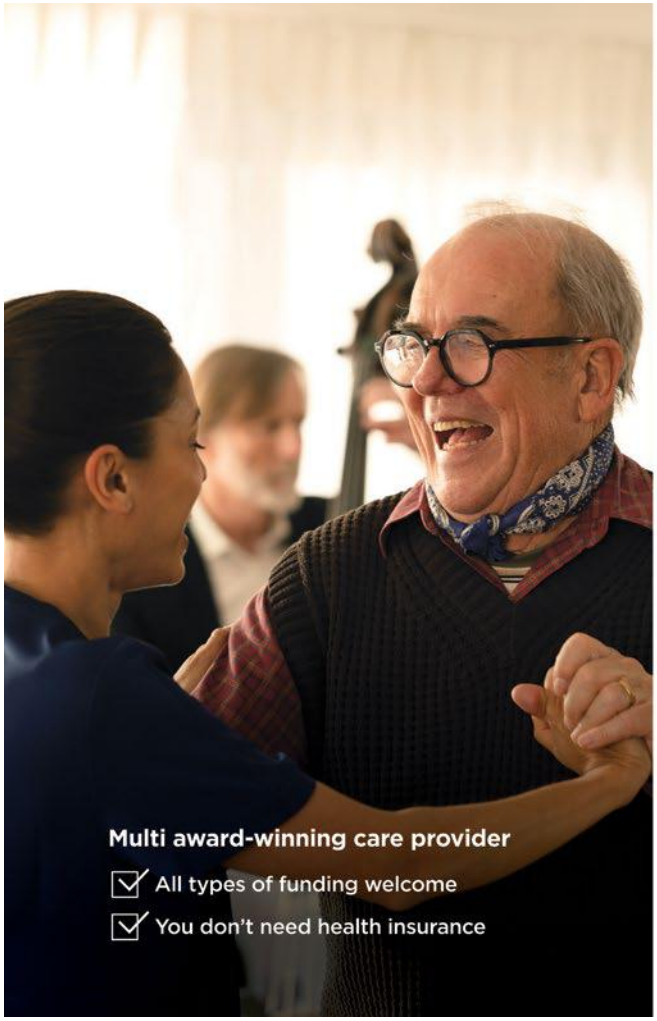

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4,200-home development moves forward despite green belt and infrastructure concerns

PLANS for a major 4,200-home development in South East Warrington have taken another significant step forward, reigniting concerns over green belt loss and whether infrastructure will keep pace with thousands of additional residents.

Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet has agreed Homes England's Development Framework Parts 1-4, marking a milestone for the South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE).

The housing-led scheme is the borough's largest residential allocation and one of the biggest Homes England-owned development sites in the North of England.

The proposals feature six neighbourhoods: Stockton Heys, Green Heys, Lumb Brook Heys, Broad Heys, Pewterspear Heys and Stretton Heys.

While supporters argue that new homes are needed to meet demand, including for affordable housing, opponents have raised concerns about the loss of open countryside and the cumulative impact of development on roads and public services.

Homes England says the framework sets out a vision for sustainable, well-connected neighbourhoods, including schools, green spaces, recreation facilities and other community amenities.

However, the fifth part of the framework – an Infrastructure Delivery Plan – has yet to be prepared.

According to the council, this will be drawn up by the Lead Delivery Organisation for South East Warrington and agreed with the authority at a later date.

This leaves important questions about the funding, detail and timetable for the infrastructure needed to support the new community.

Residents will want assurances over how additional traffic will be accommodated, what improvements will be made to roads and junctions, and whether schools, GP services and other public facilities will have sufficient capacity.

The timing of delivery will also be crucial, with major transport improvements and public facilities potentially taking years to plan and build.

The framework follows Homes England's acquisition of 34 hectares of land within the urban extension area in April 2025. The agency says it now owns 98 per cent of the developable area, allowing a more coordinated approach to delivering the access infrastructure needed to unlock the wider site.

Homes England says the proposals have been shaped by engagement with residents, stakeholders and other interested parties, with further consultation expected as the project progresses.

Cllr John Kerr-Brown, the council's cabinet member for environment, housing and public protection, welcomed the decision.

He said: "Providing high-quality homes for local people remains a key priority for the council, and this development supports our ongoing work to deliver a wide range of housing options, including affordable homes, in every part of the borough to help meet local demand."

Type 2 diabetes: Why you need to know your numbers before your body tells you

By Dr Naveed Ijaz, Chief Clinical Officer and Consultant in Family Medicine, MyGP Clinic

Type 2 diabetes is a lot like high blood pressure. It creeps up quietly, does real damage while you are not looking and by the time you feel something is wrong, it has often been doing harm for years. The difference is that we can catch it early and catching it early changes everything.

Around two million people in the UK have type 2 diabetes. A million more have pre-diabetes and do not know it. Pre-diabetes is not a diagnosis that sounds like much. It sounds like you are fine, just not quite fine enough. In reality, it is an opportunity. It is the moment where a small amount of attention now stops a serious disease later.

What does type 2 diabetes actually do?

Your pancreas (a little organ which sits to the back of your abdomen) makes insulin. Insulin is the key that lets glucose into your cells to give you energy. In type 2 diabetes, that key stops working properly. Glucose builds up in your blood and starts damaging blood vessels and nerves. That damage is why diabetes causes heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, blindness and amputations. Those are not rare complications either. They are why diabetes is one of the leading causes of death and disability in this country.

The good news is simple. If you catch it when it is still pre-diabetes, you can often reverse it entirely.

What should I be watching for?

The classic symptoms are increased thirst, frequent urination, tiredness, blurred vision and unexplained weight changes. However, most people with type 2 diabetes do not notice any of that. They feel fine. They wake up one morning and their GP tells them they have had it for five years and their blood sugar has been running so high it has already started damaging their eyes or their kidneys.

That is why screening matters more than symptoms.

Who should be screened?

Being overweight, especially around the middle, is the biggest risk factor. Family history is another big one. Your age goes up the list as you get older. Interestingly, i am seeing more and more younger type 2 diabetics as well as slimmer individuals who lack muscle mass. I mention this because the more muscle you have, the better equipped you are at preventing diabetes. A simple blood test picks it up. We look for your fasting glucose, your HbA1c which is your average blood sugar over the last three months. We also sometimes look at fasting insulin and a few other markers of what we call "insulin resistance".

The thresholds are straightforward. A fasting glucose above 7 or an HbA1c above 48 and you have diabetes. Fasting glucose between 5.6 and 6.9 or HbA1c between 41 and 48 is pre-diabetes.

Pre-diabetes is where you act in most settings although I would personally argue that you should take notice when your HbA1C is above 37.

This is not fatalistic. People do not drift inevitably from pre-diabetes to diabetes. They do not if they actually do something about it.

Weight loss of around 5 to 10 per cent of your body weight shifts those numbers remarkably. Regular physical activity and building muscle does the same thing. Better sleep, less stress, cutting down on sugary foods and processed carbohydrates, drinking more water instead of sugary drinks. None of it is rocket science. None of it is even that hard.

The reason I mention it is that when someone with pre-diabetes genuinely engages with it, I have seen their blood sugar normalise completely. They did not need medication. They did not develop diabetes. They stopped a disease in its tracks.

That is what screening for pre-

diabetes actually means. It means finding people at that exact moment when lifestyle change can genuinely transform their health.

What next?

If you have not been tested in the last year and you are over 40, overweight or have a family history of diabetes, ask your GP or your pharmacist. Better still, come in for a structured health check with us at myGP clinic. We test your fasting glucose and HbA1c. We check your cholesterol and your blood pressure at the same time. We explain the numbers properly and we build a plan that actually works. We would much rather find pre-diabetes on a blood test than diabetes after it has already caused harm.

Come on and have a chat with me, my door is always open.

Volunteers put community spirit firmly in the spotlight

Warrington's community spirit was on full display at Victoria Park when rugby league legend Sir Kevin Sinfield visited the town – highlighting the vital role volunteers play in bringing people together.

A bumper 656 people completed the 5km Warrington Victoria Parkrun in glorious sunshine before, just five hours later, former Mayor of Warrington Geoff Settle joined crowds welcoming Kevin Sinfield to the athletics track.

Sinfield was completing the final leg of his latest 7 in 7 challenge, raising money and awareness for the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association.

As part of his run to the Grand Final at Old Trafford, he joined members of the local MND community for an additional mile around the track.

Geoff said: "He spoke to them warmly and encouraged them to get to know each other for future support and friendship. He then led them around four laps of the blue track to do their mile.

"It was great to watch and the cheers from the spectators were a lovely sound as they completed each lap."

The event inspired Geoff to highlight the rewards of volunteering and encourage more people to get involved with local charities and community organisations.

"Volunteering is very rewarding and often gives you experiences and responsibilities that will last you a lifetime," he said. "Some you can put on your CV."

He recommends Warrington Voluntary Action, based at The Gateway opposite Warrington Town Hall, as a starting point for anyone looking to find opportunities.

Geoff recalled his time as mayor, when he regularly attended events organised by local charities.

"I couldn't believe how many charities I was invited to attend and speak at," he said.

"There was always a warm reception. However, ten years on, times have changed and things are much harder. Cuts and the lack of cash for the charity bucket have only made things worse."

Warrington Parkrun is one accessible way to get involved. The weekly event attracted 48 volunteers, including 18 pacers, mainly from Victoria Park RC and Spectrum Striders.

Volunteers undertake roles including barcode scanning, marshalling, managing the finish funnel and acting as tail walkers, helping ensure the event runs smoothly and safely.

Volunteers meet at around 8.30am on Saturday mornings before the Run Director's briefing.

The event welcomes runners, walkers, buggies and dogs, provided dogs are kept on a short lead.

For those preferring a less active role, Geoff also highlights Warrington Visually Impaired People, based at the Old School on Fairfield and Howley, where he is chairman.

Opportunities include driving the minibus, assisting drivers, helping serve refreshments, chatting with members, playing dominoes or becoming a trustee.

"There are loads more charities available offering a variety of roles," he added.

Geoff also believes the town's mayors deserve greater recognition for championing charities and volunteers.

He encourages community groups and charities to invite the mayor to their events to celebrate their achievements and highlight the contribution of volunteers.

For more information about volunteering, contact Warrington Voluntary Action or approach local charities and community organisations directly.

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Give a little time and make a big difference at St. Rocco's

St. Rocco's Hospice is calling on people across Warrington to give a little of their time and make a big difference by volunteering in one of its charity shops.

Volunteers play a vital role in helping St. Rocco's raise the funds needed to provide specialist hospice care and support to local patients, their families and carers.

Whether it's a few hours each week, one day a month or something in between, there are opportunities to suit a wide range of interests and availability.

For Rachel, volunteering at St. Rocco's Hood Manor shop has helped her take an important step outside her comfort zone.

Rachel, who has anxiety and panic disorder, began volunteering four years ago after deciding she wanted to do something to help her get out of the house.

She started by volunteering for three hours every Friday, steaming clothes in the corner of the shop.

She said: "I did three hours on a Friday where I stood in a corner steaming clothes for the first couple of months until I was asked very nicely if I wanted to work on the till.

"Which then brought me out of my comfort zone and talking to customers."

St. Rocco's says volunteering is about much more than simply giving up your time.

It provides an opportunity to meet new people, make friends, learn new skills and build confidence, while also gaining valuable retail and customer service experience that can enhance a CV.

For people looking to return to work, try something new or simply give something back to their local community, volunteering can be a rewarding way to get involved.

Most importantly, every item sorted, customer served and donation processed helps St. Rocco's raise vital funds to support local people living with life-limiting illnesses.

Volunteer opportunities are available across St. Rocco's retail network, including its high street charity shops, award-winning eBay store and Distribution Centre.

To find out more about volunteering in a St. Rocco's shop, visit St. Rocco's volunteering page.

Alternatively, residents can pop into their local St. Rocco's shop and speak to a member of the team, or contact the Voluntary Services team on 01925 575780 or volunteering@stroccos.org.uk

St. Rocco's Hospice
Making Every Day Count

Bereavement Café

Our Bereavement Cafés offer a friendly, welcoming space where anyone affected by bereavement can meet others, share experiences, and access support in a relaxed and informal setting.

To make support more accessible for those with work, family or caring commitments, we have introduced a new evening Bereavement Café at **St. Rocco's Hospice**, held on the first Tuesday of every month from **7.30pm to 8.30pm.**

We have also relocated our Bank Park Bereavement Café to the **Masonic Hall, Warrington.** This café will continue to take place on the last Tuesday of every month from **10.00am to 11.30am.**

Our cafés are free and open for anyone to 'Drop-In', a referral or pre-booking is not needed.

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Verify, plan, celebrate: three jobs for November

Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

By the time this issue reaches you, the Chancellor will have delivered his first Budget, and we'll pick through what it means for business owners next month. In the meantime, three things won't wait for the dust to settle: a Companies House deadline many directors still haven't met, January's tax bill, and the annual question of how generous you can be at Christmas without HMRC taking a share.

Companies House identity verification

Identity verification became compulsory from 18 November 2025, beginning a twelve-month transition for existing directors and people with significant control (PSCs). As that rollout reaches its final stages, check your own deadlines rather than assuming everyone has until the same date.

Existing directors must provide their Companies House personal code with their company's next confirmation statement during the transition. A company cannot file that statement unless all its directors have verified.

PSCs have separate requirements. Existing PSCs who are also directors generally have a fourteen-day window starting the day after their company's confirmation statement date. Those who are not directors generally have the first fourteen days of their birth month. Check the Companies House register for your particular dates.

You can verify directly through GOV.UK One Login or through an Authorised Corporate Service Provider, such as an appropriately registered accountant. Successful verification gives you a personal code, but that is only the first step: the code must then be supplied for each relevant role.

If you are both a director and a PSC, you must submit it separately for each capacity. If you hold several directorships, it must be linked to every company.

January's tax bill

For many self-employed people and landlords, 31 January 2027 brings two payments: any remaining tax for 2025/26 and the first payment on account towards 2026/27.

Payments on account are normally each half of the previous year's relevant Income Tax and Class 4 National Insurance liability. They exclude Capital Gains Tax and student loan repayments. Exceptions apply, including where the relevant bill is below £1,000 or more than 80% of the tax was collected outside Self-Assessment.

A stronger trading year can therefore produce a substantial January bill. Suppose a sole trader's relevant liability rises from £8,000 to £12,000, having already paid £8,000 on account. January brings a £4,000 balancing payment plus a £6,000 payment on account: £10,000 altogether. Another £6,000 follows on 31 July 2027.

If you reasonably expect this year's liability to be lower, you can apply to reduce the payments on account. Be realistic: interest is charged if you reduce them too far.

Preparing your return now gives you time to budget. If payment looks difficult, contact HMRC early to discuss whether a Time to Pay arrangement is available.

Your return also helps establish your Making Tax Digital position. Subject to exemptions, sole traders and landlords whose combined gross self-employment and property income exceeded £30,000 in 2025/26 must use Making Tax Digital for Income Tax from 6 April 2027. That threshold relates to income before expenses, not profit.

Christmas parties and gifts

A staff Christmas party can be entirely tax free, provided the cost is no more than £150 per head, including VAT, and the event is open to all staff, or all staff at a particular location. The £150 is an annual figure covering all such events. It's worked out by dividing the total cost, including transport and accommodation, by everyone attending, partners included. Treat it as a cliff edge rather than an allowance: go £1 over and the whole amount becomes taxable, not just the excess. The cost is still deductible for corporation tax, and VAT on the staff element is generally recoverable.

Gifts to employees fall under the trivial benefits rules. A gift costing £50 or less is tax free as long as it isn't cash or a cash voucher, isn't a reward for work or performance, and isn't something the employee is contractually entitled to. A turkey, a bottle of wine or a store gift card all qualify. Directors of close companies are capped at £300 of trivial benefits a year.

Client gifts are less generous. They're only deductible if they cost no more than £50 per person a year and carry a conspicuous advertisement for your business. Food, drink, tobacco and vouchers never qualify, however well branded. The branded diary passes; the hamper doesn't. Client entertaining, including inviting customers to your party, is never deductible, and the VAT on it can't be reclaimed either.

None of this is complicated, but each of these areas catches people out every year. A little planning in November makes for a much quieter January, and if the Budget brings any surprises, we'll cover them next month.

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Warrington Wolves announce boardroom changes

WARRINGTOBN Wolves have announced that Professor Steven Broomhead MBE and Norman Summers have stepped down from the club's Board of Directors.

Norman has been on the board since 1998, while Steven joined in 2003 and served as chairman from late 2009 until becoming vice-chairman in 2017.

The club has paid tribute to both men for their long-standing dedication, support and commitment to the Wire, praising their expertise and passion for Warrington Wolves.

Professor Broomhead said he was stepping back after 28 years as a board and non-executive member, reflecting on his time working alongside nine head coaches, five chief executives and more than 450 players, as well as supporters, sponsors, staff and the wider rugby league community.

He said: "I will continue to support our Club as it continues its journey of progress, achievements and positive impact on and off the pitch."

The club thanked both directors for their contribution over many years.

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