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Plea to keep names

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Editor's Comment

AS we approach the 32nd anniversary of the IRA bomb attack on Warrington, I echo the sentiments of peace campaigner Colin Parry regarding the issue surrounding the names of Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball remaining on the iconic Peace Centre.

The project to create a peace centre, the brainchild of Tim's mother Wendy, was to have a living memorial to the two boys who tragically lost their lives following the bombing atrocity which also saw more than 50 innocent shoppers injured, some of them badly.

While the use of the building is changing to a SEND education facility, it will still have the ethos of supporting young people and continue to be a fitting tribute to the two boys.

I find it baffling that no assurances can be given regarding the boys' names being retained on

the building – and from our online reporting, it is clear most people agree that the names should be retained on the building forever more.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank Colin and Wendy for all their endeavours over many years for ensuring good triumphed over evil.

It has been said many times the bomb attack on Warrington became a major turning point in the troubles and a lot of this was down to how Warrington as a town and a community, responded to the bomb attack, by offering the hand of peace.

Colin and Wendy were at the



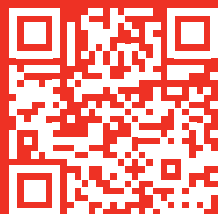
forefront of this, with much support from Warrington Borough Council and church leaders.

They and the boys have left a legacy they can be truly proud of, as can Warrington as a town.

Let's just hope common sense prevails and the boys' names can continue to live on, where they rightfully belong, on the Peace Centre.

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Peace campaigner implores council to keep boys names on iconic building

PEACE campaigner Colin Parry is imploring Warrington Borough Council to retain the names of Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball on the iconic Peace Centre.

As the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation charity, set up by Colin and Wendy Parry in memory of the boys killed by an IRA bomb attack on the town over 30 years ago prepares to vacate the building, no assurances have been given that the boys names will be retained on a proposed SEND educational facility for youngsters with special

needs.

The borough council is in the process of purchasing the building, which was jointly owned between the Peace Foundation and the NSPCC, to transform it into an educational centre for youngsters post 16 and post 19, with special educational needs. The sale completion is expected to go through by the end of March, around the time of the 32nd anniversary of the IRA Bridge Street bombing which claimed the lives of the two boys and injured 56 shoppers.

Colin said: "I Hope the name of the building will continue with both boys' names for emotional and practical reasons. It is a massive part of our town and how it responded to the bombing.

"I accept the purpose of the building will change but I implore the council to keep the boys' names attached to the building. I think it would be a very poor decision if the boys' names were removed."

Meanwhile the charity will formally cease trading in its current form and become a "grant making" charity.

Colin added: "The fact that the Foundation would have celebrated its 30th anniversary in March 2025 is, in itself, a great milestone

that Wendy and I would never have imagined we would reach, but the endless struggle for sustainability, and the fact that time and age has caught up with us both, means that this chapter in the Foundation's history, will close, but as it does so, a new chapter will begin.

"With our 50% share of the proceeds of the sale (the other 50% goes to the NSPCC, as co-owners of the Centre), we plan to start the next chapter, as a 'grant making' charity.

"In our new guise, we will invite applications for funding from charities and not for profit organisations, which share our aims of reducing the threat and reality of violence in our society, and particularly violence against women and girls, and young people of all genders, race and faith, who are targeted by extremists.

"This change to our business operations does not, of course, preclude people helping with our funding needs," he added.



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Pioneering health and wellbeing project launched

A pioneering wellbeing initiative, Digi Care Health UK, is set to transform the lives of 29,000 households across Warrington, marking a significant step toward addressing quality of life and health challenges in the town.

Starting in Warrington Digi Care Health UK is poised to become a national model for health and wellbeing, innovation, improving quality of life for those most in need and allowing more people to receive care at home, taking pressure off NHS beds and social care.

Digi Care aligns with the government's mission to build a future-ready health and social care system. The initiative focuses on reducing health inequalities, driving economic growth, and improving the financial sustainability of healthcare delivery.

The project, launched at Warrington & Vale Royal College today, Friday, supports national and Integrated Care Board (ICB) ambitions to shift healthcare from hospitals to community-based prevention and care models. Key areas of focus include addressing multi-morbidity and leveraging advanced digital infrastructure such as high-speed broadband and telecare/telemedicine technologies. The initiative will also lay the foundation for a new Neighbourhood Health Service, enabling innovative approaches to healthcare delivery.

Central to Digi Care Health UK is the rollout of high-speed broadband fibre across local communities, facilitating the transition from analogue to digital systems. This

infrastructure will also underpin broader community wellbeing objectives, encompassing mental health support, community safety, and enhanced reassurance for residents.

The project, which will be piloted in the Central 6 wards of Warrington, starting with 300 homes, is being delivered by a diverse partnership board that includes:

- Future Connected Fibre
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Trust
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside
- NHS England
- Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Cheshire Constabulary
- LiveWire
- Warrington Chamber of Commerce
- Cheshire Digital
- Warrington Primary Care Networks
- Warrington & Vale Royal College
- Torus Housing

Professor Steven Broomhead MBE, Chief Executive of Warrington Borough Council, said: "This project represents a major leap forward for communities in Warrington. By combining cutting-edge technology with a focus on prevention, Digi Care Health UK will improve health outcomes and quality of



Pictured: (L-R): Nichola Newton – Principal and Chief Executive of Warrington Vale Royal College, Prof Steven Broomhead MBE – Chief Executive of Warrington Borough Council, Charlotte Nichols MP (Warrington North), Elaine Burns – Future Connected Fibre, Dave Thompson – Chief Executive of Warrington Disability Partnership).

life for thousands of residents. The innovations will see Warrington lead the way in supporting the government's aspirations."

Sarah Hall, MP for Warrington South, said: "Digi Care demonstrates how collaboration between government, healthcare providers, and local stakeholders can create meaningful change. This initiative will help us build a healthier, more connected future."

Shaun Ennis, Managing Director of Digi Care Health UK is delighted to get started. He said: "This project will be revolutionary in the

UK and give great support to the health care system and support the government's aspiration to digitise elements of the NHS to free up capacity in its hospitals. Warrington is the start and we look forward to improving tens of thousands of lives with this project."

With the support of its multi-sector partners, Digi Care Health UK is poised to become a national model for health and wellbeing innovation, creating lasting impacts for individuals, families, and the wider community.

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Workwear company primed for growth after double management buyout

A WARRINGTON-based workwear company is primed for growth under new ownership after a double management buyout.

J & K Ross, of Kerfoot Street, Warrington and manufacturing business Dale Techniche, which is based in Nelson, Lancashire, have nearly 50 staff in total and a combined turnover of £10m.

They have been acquired from the Ross family for an undisclosed sum by a management team led by Neil Wilcock.

A team at north west law firm Bermans, comprising corporate partners Charlotte Mills and Laura McMorland and solicitor Nathan Hughes, advised the management team on the double buyout.

J & K Ross, which was founded by Jean and Ken Ross in 1976, supplies safety workwear, protective and hi-vis clothing, uniforms and PPE to companies in sectors including utilities, logistics, manufacturing, construction, oil and gas, chemicals and petrochemicals.

At its Warrington facility, the business has a retail shop alongside its offices, warehousing, embroidery and printing operations.

The Ross family acquired Dale Techniche, which makes health and

safety workwear, flame-retardant clothing, racewear and flight wear such as pilots' uniforms, in 2003.

Following the deal, J & K Ross and Dale Techniche continued to trade as standalone businesses.

The buyout team alongside Neil Wilcock comprises J & K Ross accounts and logistics director Sharon Sykes, the company's purchasing manager Phil Taylor, customer experience manager Lisa Robinson and communications and IT manager Phill Moir-Riches, and Donna Emmott, the operations director at Dale Techniche.

Neil, who joined J & K Ross as a sales representative more than 30 years ago and has been managing director since 2020, said: "Both companies are really important names in their respective industries. It's very much business as usual, and we look forward to serving the needs of our existing customers and new ones, and working with our trusted suppliers, for many more years while maintaining our high standards of service thanks to our dedicated and knowledgeable team."

He added: "We have a great

management team who understand the businesses well and we have exciting plans to expand, as there are strong growth opportunities for both companies.

"At J & K Ross, we will be looking to add to our product portfolio and expand into new sectors, bringing in additional staff to assist with our strategy.

"Dale Techniche is a sleeping giant and there is great scope to expand its customer base.

"The Ross family was keen that the businesses should be able to build on the extensive knowledge base of the senior staff and the wider team so, despite interest from other parties, they were keen to hand over ownership to the management and ensure there would be continuity. Our fantastic and loyal staff are all very happy with the outcome."

Charlotte Mills said: "J & K Ross and Dale Techniche are terrific north west businesses with strong foundations and excellent reputations for their commitment to quality and customer service.

"The six-strong MBO team has around 140 years' experience of working in the companies between them, and it was a genuine pleasure to guide them to completion.

"They were great to work with and I am confident that the management team will make a huge success of the acquisitions, powered by their enthusiasm and experience. They have an excellent platform for growth and I wish them every success."

Close Brothers funded the deal. Kirsti Pinnell and Helen Mather at law firm Kuits, and Matt Beckley and Lewis Pearson at DJH Corporate Finance, advised the Ross family. Cole Associates provided corporate finance advice to the buyers.



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Remaining positive post-Brexit

by Stephen Fitzsimons - Warrington Chamber of Commerce

We recently had the opportunity to present the Warrington investment proposition to Chris Barton, HW Trade Commissioner for Europe.

Once we escorted the elephant out of the room (reduced exports post-Brexit), we had a really positive discussion on why companies base themselves in Warrington, with a particular focus on the nuclear sector (employment up 1,500 since 2023 to 6,500). Given that we have two international airports within 25 minutes drive and that most businesses in Daresbury think they are in Warrington, we extended "Greater Warrington" a

little wider than usual! Chris was really impressed by the number of headquarters in the town, including most of the major nuclear players at Birchwood Park. We're looking forward to a stronger economic relationship with our European neighbours in the years ahead.

We are nearing the end of the UK Shared Prosperity Funded Start & Scale Up Club, although we are confident that it may continue on a smaller scale into 2026.



Birchwood Park

We will have supported over 100 business people, either at the launch of their new enterprises or further into their growth journeys. We've seen a wide variety of projects, from Artificial Intelligence in defence to dog training. Over 90 new jobs have been created this year, partly because of our modest grants and masterclasses, however largely because of the hard work and creativity of our amazing entrepreneurs. We're looking forward to seeing the next Apple and Amazon being born in Warrington.

The 27th Warrington Property Review will once again be held at the Park Royal Hotel on the 11th April. This is one of the most important business events in the calendar, with up to 200 property professionals from across the north west hearing about all the big deals completed during the previous 12 months. There will be a few tears this year as we bid farewell to Angela Hankey, the organiser of the Property Review every year since its launch. Angela is a true Warringtonian, having worked for the Council, Fiat and Greenall's. We'll really miss her, however she deserves to put her feet up!

Roll on the daffodils,
Stephen

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Stephen Fitzsimons
01925 715150

stephen.fitzsimons@warrington-chamber.co.uk



Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North

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Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

Divorce top tips

Going through a divorce can be challenging so here are a few top tips to bear in mind:

- 1. Seek legal advice early:** Taking legal advice early enables you to learn about your rights and how the process works. Early advice might also enable you to take steps to protect your interests, make important informed decisions early and perhaps avoid costly mistakes.
- 2. Organise your finances:** Gather your financial documents early, such as property values, mortgage details, payslips, bank statements, tax returns, pension values etc. Sooner or later it will be necessary to exchange disclosure with the other side and making an early start on preparing this can help speed things up and streamline the process.
- 3. Be prepared to compromise:** Keep your expectations realistic. It's important to understand that you will almost certainly need to compromise in some way. Rarely does one party have everything all their own way. Rarely, if ever, does one party exit a marriage entirely on their own terms. Be willing to make concessions where necessary and compromise within reason. It's not a weakness to be sensible and realistic.
- 4. Consider the children:** Divorce can have a profound impact on children in many ways. Thought will obviously need to be given to who the children will live with, where they will live, contact arrangements, schooling and so on, but also careful consideration needs to be had for their emotional and psychological wellbeing and appreciate that some children may struggle with coming to terms with the fact that their family is breaking up.
- 5. Pick your battles:** Fighting over absolutely everything can prolong the process, escalate tensions and add unnecessary expense. It makes sense to identify, prioritise and focus on which issues are worth fighting for and if necessary be willing to let go on smaller disagreements that might not be worth the stress, conflict and expense of arguing over.

For advice and assistance regarding divorce and related matters please get in touch - we have a lot of experience advising, guiding and supporting clients in this area of law.

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Belong hails inspirational care champions



A community support worker at Belong at Home Warrington has been recognised for her exceptional compassion at the dementia care provider's annual Champion Awards.

The awards recognise the best of the best amongst its villages and community care teams from across the region.

Laura Cooper won the Compassion Award for going to extraordinary lengths to support customers and ensure continuity of care. The judges commended her professionalism and positivity and ability to make people feel safe and comfortable, referring to one customer who is prone to anxiety and calls Laura an 'angel on Earth'.

After receiving nominations from customers, relatives and colleagues, a panel of independent judges determined winners from a final shortlist, with the results revealed at an evening gala at The Queen at Chester Hotel. All were presented with a handmade ceramic trophy, designed by Belong customer Alma Worthington as part of a creative competition for the occasion.

Speaking of the event, Belong's chief executive, Martin Rix, said: "We have many talented colleagues who have chosen to dedicate their professional lives to caring for our customers, with many nominations describing them as being 'like family'."

"As discussion around the reform of social care continues to gain

traction, we are committed to shining a light on both their professionalism and hard work through these awards. We know, first-hand, that it is our ability to invest in our people that is critical to the future of the sector. Our unique 'village living' set-up creates a truly special working environment where people can thrive, and our annual Champion Awards serve to congratulate all our colleagues for their success."

The news follows a year of accomplishments in 2024, with Belong picking up national accolades at the HealthInvestor Seniors Housing Awards, LaingBuisson Awards, and the Great British Care Awards. Meanwhile, its community home care service, Belong at Home, was crowned in Homecare.co.uk's Top 20 Large and Mid-size Home Care Groups and is the only not-for-profit operator to have placed every year since 2018.

The Belong Champion Awards 2024 was made possible thanks to sponsors: Arjo, Citron Hygiene, Litmus, M&D Cleaning, Search, and Triangle PR.

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

Green light for £32m care facility on former school site

CABINET members voted to approve a 64-bed care facility on the site of a disused school in Bewsey, Warrington, which will cost more than £32m.

The Bewsey Old School site in Lockton Lane, Warrington, will be redeveloped as part of the proposals to create an intermediate care facility allowing patients to remain in their homes following stays in hospital.

Cllr Maureen McLaughlin said intermediate care "enables more people to live independently at home for as long as possible." The proposal would create "sufficient bed based facilities for the next 20 years plus." It was part of a plan to deliver "joined up and seamless health services" delivering care "in the right place at the right time". The current provision of services across the town is described as "fragmented" in the report and Padgate House is "not fit for future provision." The facilities, which will be based in close proximity to Warrington Hospital, will create facilities "with significant privacy and dignity."

She told councillors at Warrington Town Hall on Monday night that there was a need to replace the ageing facilities at Padgate House, which will be sold.

The corridors at the current facility are too narrow and the building is in a poor condition, she said. There are no en-suite facilities for residents.

Doing nothing re Padgate House "is not an option" due to the building failure and maintenance costs. The new facility will address the need for a care facility now and for the next 20 years. If the issue is not addressed, it could result in "longer stays in hospital" which would impact waiting times for other patients. Construction costs are estimated at £32.2m excluding VAT. The capital finance regime would be delivered in partnership with NHS Cheshire. A further report will be presented to Cabinet to appoint a construction contractor and approve a final budget. Extensive public consultation has already taken place "and is the recommended service option of both health and service care commissioners to meet future need," the report said.

The design contract for stages four to seven of the development, is to be awarded to Ellis Williams Architects Limited.

The care facility proposal was unanimously approved by Cabinet members.

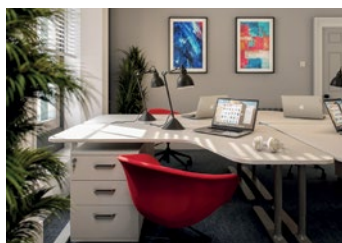
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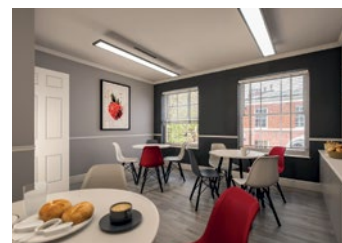
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BELONG
WARRINGTON

Fond farewell for town's longest serving LPU Inspector and Chief Inspector

CHIEF Inspector Neil Drum, Warrington's longest serving LPU Inspector and Chief Inspector, has retired after handing over the reins to the town's newest Chief Inspector Rob McLoughlin.

Chief Inspector McLoughlin started his career with Cheshire Constabulary in 2002 at the age of 18 and has since dedicated his service to policing the communities of northern Cheshire.

Initially assigned to Widnes, he spent the first five years of his career serving as a constable across various policing areas within Halton. In 2007, he transitioned to the role of Detective Constable, dedicating seven years to the CID and Northern Crime Unit in Warrington before being promoted to Sergeant.

As a Sergeant, Rob served in Response, Beat and as the

Proactive CID Detective Sergeant for Runcorn. Upon his promotion to Inspector, he undertook the roles of Beat Inspector for Widnes Local Policing Unit (LPU) and Detective Inspector for the Northern Area Investigation Team in Halton.

More recently, as Chief Inspector, Rob held the positions of LPU Commander at Runcorn and Detective Chief Inspector for the Northern Area. In addition to his command at Warrington LPU, Rob serves as Cheshire Constabulary's force lead for robbery investigations as well as night-time economy policing.

Outside of work, Rob is married with two daughters. He enjoys spending quality time with his family and following football.

Upon his appointment as Chief Inspector for Warrington, Rob expressed his pride, stating: "I am extremely proud to serve as Chief Inspector at Warrington. My colleague Chief Inspector Neil Drum is leaving the LPU in a very healthy position but my role is crucial in continuing to ensure our officers receive the support necessary to meet the needs and expectations of our residents."

"I have a deep personal connection and investment in this town, having spent several years



policing the area in various frontline roles, I can definitely understand and relate to the challenges of neighbourhood policing and recognise the impacts on our communities – I am committed to ensuring public confidence in the police.

"My priority is to put our residents first, striving to make our area an even safer environment for all who live, work, and visit our great town. Supported by a strong team and established relationships with our partner agencies, I plan to harness their passion and energy to enhance safety in Warrington."

"I am a strong advocate for preventive and proactive policing and expect my officers to maintain a commitment to hard work, pragmatic policing and keep their composure. I will ensure that our officers excel in the basics and work tirelessly to target those who seek to harm our communities."

Chief Inspector McLoughlin succeeds Chief Inspector Drum, who spent the majority of his policing career serving the people and communities of Warrington in most policing ranks.

Neil began his policing career in 1997 as a Police Constable with the response team at Warrington's Arpley Street Station and wanted to join Cheshire Constabulary because of its upstanding reputation.

Following his start in Warrington, Neil then became a Detective Constable with the town's CID unit, before being promoted to the rank of Sergeant in March 2003 and serving in Wilmslow, Widnes and Warrington in Patrol, Detective, Neighbourhood and Staff Officer roles.

The majority of Neil's work has centred around protecting and serving Warrington's neighbourhoods. In 2010, Neil was appointed to the Town Centre Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) Temporary Inspector role for 14 months.

His time here would greatly benefit the town, with the NPU being awarded the Kevin Brinkman Northern Area Award for making a significant reduction in crime and incident demand and an effective robust policing approach.

Neil then led the Warrington Central NPU, the largest NPU in the Northern Area from 2012.

In July of 2015, with the introduction of the Local Policing Unit model, Neil would become Neighbourhood Inspector, meaning he was in charge of managing all six Beat Management Teams that sit within Warrington LPU. He would be in this role for the next five years.

In November 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Neil faced new previously unseen

challenges alongside the day-to-day running of the largest LPU in Cheshire, following his promotion to his current role of Warrington's Chief Inspector and has led the LPU to date.

Whilst here, he played a part in the delivery of the AIT Proof of Concept Team at Warrington in 2022 and oversaw the LPU achieving reductions in incident demand, reduced crime and improved arrest and detection rates.

Neil has served at Warrington at PC, Sergeant, Inspector and Chief Inspector rankings and is the longest-serving Inspector and Chief Inspector to serve in Warrington.

Neil said: "There is never a quiet day here at Warrington, it's fast-paced and demanding, so you are never bored – I will miss that pace and I will miss the vibrancy of working at Warrington and I will certainly miss the people."

"The journey we have taken over the last few years in terms of our performance improvements and making a difference and keeping people safe has been superb and that is down to the work of everyone here at Warrington."

"We have some fantastic officers, staff and volunteers at Warrington who do some tremendous work day-in-day-out to help keep the public safe. To lead people like that and to do extraordinary things has been an honour – that I would say is the highlight of my career."

"I have seen many people come and go from Warrington, many leadership teams change and other changes and many serious and tragic big incidents, but the pinnacle of my career has been leading Warrington LPU. I am very passionate about policing in Warrington and keeping people safe, so to obtain the post of Chief Inspector has been an absolute privilege."

"I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who works and has worked at Warrington LPU, and across the Northern Area, for their outstanding work, dedication. Over the next few months, Neil intends to spend quality time with his family, with plans for a much-deserved holiday with his wife Jayne, who works for the Constabulary's Northern Area Performance Team, and their two sons, Jack and Josh, as well as a trip to see his brother, Mark, in Sydney."

Despite all he has planned for the future, Neil has reassured incoming Chief Inspector McLoughlin, Area Commander Superintendent Adam Ross and the hard-working policing team at Warrington's Arpley Street station that he will make sure to come in and visit from time to time to see how they are faring in his absence.

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Annual Report 2024/25

Are you concerned about your energy bills? Would you benefit from some help and advice?

Our Energy Advisors can help!



Services we offer

- Personalised 1-2-1 energy advice via telephone, drop in's, appointments, online and email.
- Help to look into additional financial support, grants and assistance.
- Attending Workshops, informative group sessions, coffee mornings, and events.
- Help and advice on your energy, electricity, gas and meters bills.
- Guidance on Energy usage and consumption.
- Tips and tricks to save you money.
- Help contacting your supplier.
- Referrals to wider services.
- Referrals to wider services.
- Information on Smart Meters.
- Advice on energy debt.
- Help with small energy-saving measures.
- Training and awareness for organisations.



Giving Disabled People Hope & Opportunity



Introduction

Chair and Chief Executive's Report

Welcome to our latest annual report.

We are both so proud of what our team have achieved during the past year. Through our services and extensive community engagement programmes, we listen, learn and respond to the thousands of disabled and older people, carers and families we work with, and together we strive to find solutions to their everyday challenges. We have also shared insights gained from hearing about their lived experiences with policy makers and service providers.

Our Energy Team engaged with nearly 8,100 vulnerable people at community events and reached 34,000 more via our social media channels. They provided energy efficiency measures, income maximisation and successful referrals to local partner agencies. They received over 7,000 emails and telephone enquiries, and worked closely with health and social care, including the NHS respiratory service, community centres and wellbeing services.

In collaboration with the Torus Foundation and other partners, we have delivered employment and training support to over 200 disabled people. We have continued to use our position as a Disability Confident employer to assist local businesses, including training over 250 senior managers from companies such as United Utilities.

Digital inclusion has been front and centre of our work, internally we have upgraded our IT systems and externally, through financial support from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Transformation Fund, we have supported over 100 vulnerable people to get connected. This funding also supported an in-depth review of assistive technology available in our Smart Flat.

Our 33rd annual Disability Awareness Day, held in July, attracted nineteen partners, who together provided the financial support, enabling us to run the week of events that, along with Sundays main show, attracted over 21,000 visitors and involved over 1,250 volunteers.

With funding secured from Warrington Borough Councils, allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we replaced our 15-year-old accessible caravan in North Wales, and we replaced over half of our fleet of mobility scooters and wheelchairs in our Shopmobility service.

Our social enterprise, the Disability Trading Company continues to grow in popularity, attracting interest from several new suppliers, being invited to influence the design of several independent living products, and passing the milestone of 500 Motability leases. In response to feedback about the cost-of-living crisis, we reopened our town centre Mobility and Independent Living store as an outlet for refurbished equipment under the banner of Loved B4 Mobility.

Our inclusive Santa's Grotto and Winter Wonderland in Walton Gardens attracted over 3,000 children, and with financial support from local businesses and individuals we distributed over 500 free tickets to disadvantaged children. Our Santa Dash attracted a record 230 Santa's.

Sadly, as we look ahead from April 2025, the future doesn't look as bright. With more organisations chasing ever decreasing funding opportunities, allocations are becoming a lottery and government decisions are leading to funding cuts across a wide range of services. Like hundreds of thousands of charities, we are facing higher employment costs due to changes to national insurance contributions and minimum wage increases, whilst our commissioners can't offer any uplifts to cover these costs.

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



Warrington Disability Partnership
'Supporting Independence throughout Life and Work'

Centre for Independent Living
Beaufort Street, Warrington WA5 1BA
01925 240064

www.disabilitypartnership.org.uk
www.disabilitytradingcompany.co.uk
www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk
info@disabilitypartnership.org.uk

disability
trading
company

2024 Highlights

The year in pictures



Celebrating and raising awareness of scooter safety for National Shopmobility Awareness Day 2024



Our Galleries Community Café receives a 5-star food hygiene rating from Warrington Borough Council



A fantastic March Hare Ball organised by the team at Aaron and Partners, kickstarted the fundraising for the WDP Accessible Caravan Appeal



WDP Founder and Chief Executive, Dave Thompson is made an Honorary Freeman of Warrington in recognition of his significant contribution to the borough



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 Store (MILS)** in Birchwood 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 a short-term hires service for various equipment.

The **Energy Service 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 or online. The Service is available specifically for Warrington residents and those registered with Warrington practices. Access to workshops, groups and services is not possible without the inclusion of Warrington & Halton Long Covid Support Service via your GP.

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 Access to Work Fund, the Disability Confident Scheme and the 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 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 holiday home in North Wales and our adapted, accessible narrowboat **The Wizard** are available for hire at competitive rates. 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 and 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

2024 Highlights

The year in pictures



A successful Charity Golf day organised by the team at AKW, raised over £4,000



Following a successful fundraising appeal in 2024, as well as funding from the UKSPS, our new fully accessible caravan is now ready to receive guests for the 2025 season



WDP Chief Executive (Dave Thompson) and DTC Commercial Director (Gavin Thompson) attended the Rehacare Exhibition in Dusseldorf to look at new initiatives and new technology to support independence



Thanks to the support of the Northwest Casual Car Club, WDP's Disability Heritage Project has been showcased at a number of Classic Car Shows



WDP Annual Charity Dinner 2024 with a fantastic performance from JK Productions



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 from our unit at Gateworth Industrial Estate. These can then be sold at a low cost to local people. 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
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Our Impact in 2024

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 2024.

“ ‘My claim for Assistance Allowance came through to me just before Christmas. Thank you so much for your kind and knowledgeable support with it - I wouldn't have managed without you. Your organisation is second-to-none with the provision of a whole wealth of information and you must help countless people, like me, through the jungle of signposting, form filling and guidance. I feel very much more independent with your support and really can't thank you enough. ”

500

People signed up to the Motability Scheme



Motability

9.6/10

DTC Motability Customers satisfaction score



Tash – Volunteer Casestudy

When did you start volunteering at WDP?

June 2024 - Galleries Cafe

How did you start volunteering at WDP?

My Nan came into WDP and asked about volunteering. A Team Member told her about the opportunities in the Community Cafe.

Why do you like volunteering?

WDP is a safe space for me and I enjoy coming in and helping people and the community.

About Tash:

When I am not volunteering, I am also completing a college course in Maths and English at Warrington Collegiate and sometimes attend the Creating Adventures discos.

What has volunteering done for you?

Volunteering has given me more confidence and helped me to learn new skills.



Our Impact

Matrix Assessment 2024/25

WDP's core values are to empower people by listening, responding and acting with integrity. Clients and learners value the impartiality, honesty and diligence of staff. This positive experience rapidly builds not only rapport but trust.

The range and effectiveness of activities to reach eligible clients is a strength. Community events, social media and prolific networking with referral partners all contribute to the organisation's high profile, stimulating many enquiries and referrals.

WDP is considered a leader among their peers. Partners say staff are influential and knowledgeable. This highly collaborative organisation invests time and energy into networking and partnering, and earns a deservedly enviable reputation in the community and beyond.

164

Adult Social Care referrals to
Direct Payments Scheme

“This is a whole new world to us as a family. My dad who is 80 and no longer mobile on his legs. We have come as a family to get him help. The advice we were given, the help and the care were all outstanding. Thank you so much to you all!”

CIL Visitor 2024

99.9%

Would recommend WDP services
to Family and Friends

Devin – Apprentice Casestudy

When did you start working at WDP?

November 2024 – Finance and Payroll apprentice

How did you start working at WDP?

I was told about the advertisement of the apprenticeship on social media and decided to apply since I have had a keen interest in Finance since completing a business qualification in college. And the apprenticeship was a good opportunity.

Why do you like working for WDP?

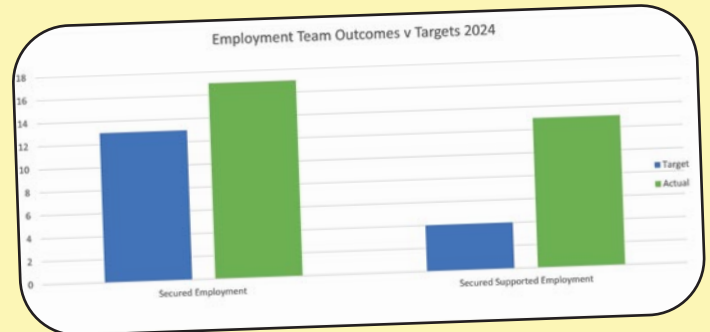
I like working at WDP because it is rewarding to work for a charity that helps people in the community, especially one that has had success in Warrington and surrounding areas. There is a great community at WDP and during my apprenticeship I have had many learning opportunities.

About Devin:

I enjoy going to the gym and socializing with my friends on the weekend. I also like going to watch Everton play football.

What has WDP done for you?

Since working at WDP I have learnt a new outlook on life and how you shouldn't take anything for granted.



100+

Referrals to the HUBS Service, providing
indepth advice and support received from
DriveAbility Northwest



474

Specialist home assessments completed
through Disability Trading Company

et in 2024



6640

HAF Meals provided in 2024

Energy Team
Tailored energy advice provided to

9,787

Local households in 12 months



“I use this service regularly for my patients/clients. It is a wonderful service from expert help from all staff. I am routinely allowed to take out aids and adaptations to trial with patients which is a great help to our OT service and patients' health independence and wellbeing. Myself and patients could not be without this service.”

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. Achievements to date include:

- The provision of Occupational Health support including counselling sessions
- Trained up Mental First-Aiders and Mental Health Champions
- Signed up to the Women In The Workplace pledge and run a Men's Mental Health workshop
- Established a Wellbeing Resources folder and a cost-of-living section on the WDP website
- Provided a quiet space for staff within the Centre for Independent Living
- Established a Neuro-divergency peer support group

Khadija – Apprentice Casestudy

When did you start working at WDP?

October 2024 – Finance and Payroll apprentice

How did you start working at WDP?

I was interested in apprenticeships and I came across this apprenticeship at WDP in Finance and Payroll. After doing some research I was interested due to WDP being a charity. In my religion charity work is very important, so its rewarding to work for a company that makes a difference and helps people in the community

Why do you like working at WDP?

The people at WDP make it an enjoyable place to work. Its nice that everyone will always say hello to each other, and that everyone knows each other. The senior management team is very understanding and supportive, especially Caroline.

About Khadija:

I enjoy reading and watching shows on Netflix. I also enjoy cooking.

What has WDP done for you?

Working at WDP has helped me improve many skills, especially confidence. I now have more confidence to speak to colleagues and with the public at fundraising events. When I started at WDP, I was nervous about talking to clients on the phone and I can now do this confidently. In addition to this, WDP has given me a sense of belonging.



650

“The loan of the wheelchair and leg rest was invaluable to my wife’s recovery, without this it would have caused her to be restricted inside.”



3,172

967

“Friendly staff, great activities, (It is) very important for my neurodivergent children to see that there are others like them, plus that there is help and support available.”

[illegible]

I enjoy cooking and helping people and want to do Health & Care at college when I leave school.



Disability Awareness Day 2024 (DAD33)

Grey skies and showers failed to dampen spirits as over 20,000 people visited the 33rd Disability Awareness Day at Walton Hall & Gardens.

Our flagship event, widely renowned as the world's largest voluntary led pan disability exhibition, was the culmination of a week-long of activities raising awareness about disability. Co-ordinated by Team WDP, with a huge team of volunteers, DAD is a pan-disability event which promotes a can do culture focusing on what disabled people can do throughout life and work.

The aim of this year's event was to promote independent living through the theme "It's what disabled people can do that matters". DAD 2024 exhibitors 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. DAD provided a one-stop-shop for information, advice and guidance relating to inclusion and independence.

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, two 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, American Football, Snooker, Rugby League, Martial Arts, Tai Chi, PowerChair Football, CrossFit and Scuba Diving in the on-site pool.

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 Together, Creating Adventures, BSL Choir, Stars Drama, Wolf Print Dance and Groovy Movers. BSL interpreters supported all acts.

Alternatively, sit alongside the Main Arena watching 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 2024 will include a free accessible Park and Ride service, free accessible buses from Warrington Town Centre, a free scooter and wheelchair loan service with trained enablers, British Sign Language interpreters, additional unisex wheelchair accessible toilets and over 100 trained stewards and helper's eager to make it a day to remember for everyone.

We would like to thank all of our sponsors and supporters, led by joint principle sponsors Expanse Learning Group and United Utilities, without your continued support the event would not be possible. Our next DAD event will be held on Sunday 13th July 2025. For more details, please visit the DAD website www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk



DAD Week Events 2024

- Creating Adventures "Greatest Show" with a wide range of variety acts.
- MerseyCare NHS Trust "Ignite Your Life", mental health and wellbeing festival.
- Ella Together "Summertime Special", a showcase of talented entertainers. Warrington Carers Hub "Wellbeing Festival"
- "Party in the Park" for disabled children, young disabled people and young carers.
- "Bjorn to be Abba", the UK's leading Abba tribute band.

New for DAD 2024

- 35 members of the North West Casual Classics Car Show displayed a range of cars at this year's DAD event!
- Our new Interactive Workshop zone was held live at the show where visitors can join in with a range of fun activities
- A total of 4 South African countries held celebratory events for Disability Awareness Day 2024! Zambia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria will be joining the DAD family thanks to negotiations by our Cameroon based co-ordinator Takang Aya Ayuk.
- Driving Mobility hosted a new Mobility Zone including four of their NW Driving Assessment Centres. Adapted cars, seating systems including adapted child seats, a mobility test track and lots of advice

Christmas 2024 at WDP

After a mega build that started at the end of October, the official opening of Santa's Grotto by took place on Saturday 30th November by the Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Wendy Johnson.

Our team of staff and volunteers, Thorn Cross, as well as several local businesses including Amazon, UPS Building Maintenance, ABB Limited and Handelsbanken produced an amazing Santa's Grotto that was open to the public each weekend leading up to Christmas from the end of November and some weekdays just before Christmas

It included a Meet & Greet with Mrs Claus, followed by a walkthrough winter Wonderland leading to Santa's Workshop. Supported by our Teddy Tombola, Yule Log decorating, letters to Santa and colouring, sale of Christmas gifts, a Reindeer Trail, a WDP/DTC information stand and an incredible Sensory Zone that added to the inclusive nature of the Grotto.

Visitors to the Grotto were entertained at various times during the weekends by local choirs performing Christmas songs.

Our friends at F11 Photography were on hand capturing the magical moments that we provided to over 3,000 children, accompanied by 1,000s of parents, grandparents, other

family members and friends.

On Sunday 8th December, we hosted our annual Santa Dash sponsored by Birchwood Shopping Centre, a 3km walk/dash with over 230 Santa's. The Deputy Mayor of Warrington and co-opted WDP trustee, Councillor Mo Hussain was on hand to present participants with a medal and certificate.

Santa's Grotto Appeal 2024

After feedback received from our team members regarding the devastating effects that the current cost of living crisis is having on some families, we took the decision to launch the Santa's Grotto Appeal 2024. This idea was raise funds to provide disadvantaged children with free tickets to visit our accessible Santa's Grotto, who would otherwise be unable to attend.

The appeal was very well received by many local businesses and individuals and within a few weeks we raised enough funds to cover the cost of 500 free places, presents and free photographs for the weekend of the 23rd and 24th November.

As a result of working with directors from WBC Social Services and Education, and Chief Executives from several local charities, we distributed **524** free tickets. There were many stories shared during this weekend, showing the struggles of many local families.

Thank you to everyone who supporter this, we would not be able to do this without you!

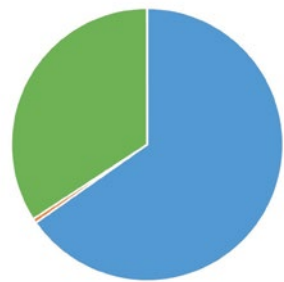


What makes our Grotto unique?

- 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.

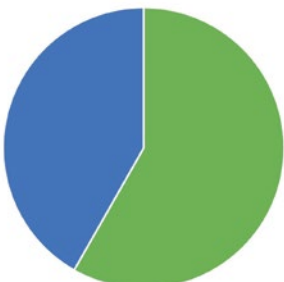
WDP Financial Position 2023-24

Income £2,448,486



- Other Trading Activities (£1.59m)
- Charitable Activities (£836.68k)
- Donations and Legacies (£12.75k)
- Investment (£496)

Expenditure £2,360,492



- Charitable Activities (£1.37m)
- Other (£985.75k)

The above information has been taken from the audited, consolidated, Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) Accounts for the financial period 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024, as reported to the Charities Commission. These accounts include the Disability Trading Company (DTC) accounts.

WDP Board of Trustees & DTC Directors



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DTC Director



ANDREW STEVENSON
DTC Non-executive director



BILL BRADLEY
DTC Non-executive director



JAMIE BOYD
DTC Non-executive director

2024 Highlights

The year in pictures

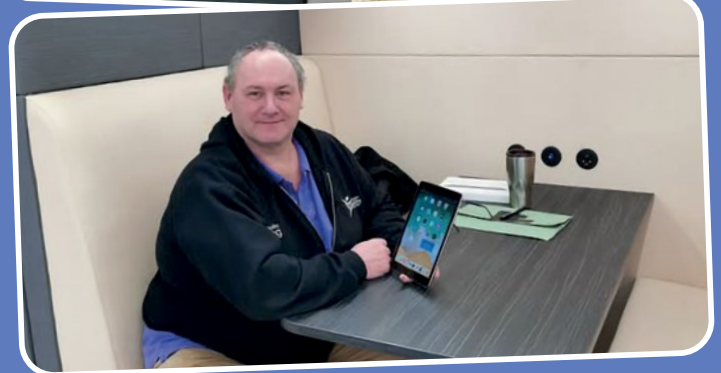


Successful funding from UKSPF enabled the purchase of a number of new scooters to replenish the fleet

The opening of the new Living Well Hub has enabled Team WDP to provide regular drop-in advice sessions in Warrington Town Centre



Another sold out tribute night with 'Bjorn to Be ABBA' as part of WDP's DAD Week events



With support from local businesses and organisations, Team WDP were able to offer over 500 free tickets to local families who would otherwise be unable to attend



NEA Fuel Poverty Day saw over 200 people attend the event to receive specialised advice and support



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:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Torus
- Expanse Learning
- NHS Cheshire & Merseyside
- United Utilities
- Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust
- Energy Redress Scheme
- East Warrington PCN
- BAS (NW) Ltd
- AKW Ltd
- Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Disability Positive
- Driving Mobility
- Protive Security & Surveillance
- Terry Lifts
- Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Liverpool City Council
- Cheshire Community Foundation
- Catalyst Choices
- Warrington's Own Buses
- David Lewis
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- Electricity Northwest
- National Energy Action
- Warrington Worldwide
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- Aaron & Partners
- Warrington Youth Zone
- Skillzone Ltd
- John Munslow
- The Heritage Café Walton Gardens
- Creating Adventures
- WBC - Highways Assets Team
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- Warrington Carers Hub

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- Mrs Hession
- Muchloved Charitable Trust
- Ladies Fellowship PMC
- The Carers Charity Knitters
- Mr Mrs Hedley
- Marilyn Mayers

Donations in memory of:
Philippa Cannon



AKW attending the WDP Charity Dinner 2024



John Munslow with the new Scuba Pool at DAD



Ella Performance Group at the Christmas Grotto VIP Night



Andy, UPS Building & Maintenance with family at the WDP Christmas Grotto

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Cost-cutting council approves 4.98 % council tax rise

MEMBERS of the public and opposition councillors packed into Warrington Town Hall as the Borough Council's Cabinet backed its controversial cost-cutting budget with a 4.98% council tax rise.

Councillors heard from Cllr Denis Matthews that the process of setting the authority's £208.045m budget had been "extremely challenging" due to rising costs and increased demand for services among the most vulnerable residents along with changes in interest rates and high inflation.

In his report he noted that setting the budget was "more difficult than in any year in recent memory."

The meeting was attended by members of the public and Liberal Democrat opposition councillors.

The Labour Cabinet members voted to increase council tax by 4.98% in the financial year 2025/6.

A resident in a Band D property will now pay £1,867.79 as a result of the proposed increase agreed by Cabinet.

The following three financial years will see proposed council tax increases of 1.98% each year.

Cllr Matthews explained that the impact of Covid on services and pressures such as inflation being at its highest level for 40 years had impacted the authority.

As a result Warrington Borough Council is currently facing "an £18.039m overspend" in the current financial year, he told councillors.

He said: "We may not feel like it, but compared to other councils, we are doing extremely well."



Run for #TeamRoccos in 2025



We are looking for runners of all abilities to join #TeamRoccos to help raise funds for patient care.

We are returning to the streets of Manchester for the **Great Manchester Run on Sunday 18th May 2025** and in celebration of our 40th anniversary we are once again the official **Charity Partner** for the **2025 Warrington Running Festival on Sunday 21st September**.

Through Run for Charity we have a number of **free places** available for both local and regional running events so there's something for everyone!

To find out more about our running events contact us on **Events@stroccos.org.uk** or **01925 575780**



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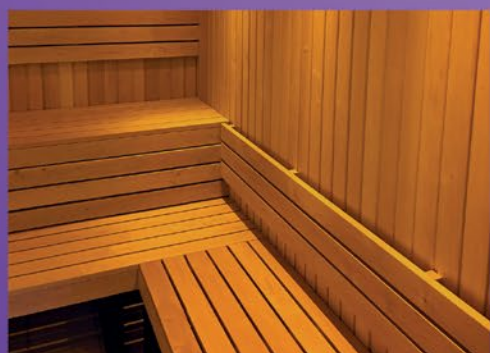
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First Warrington Wellbeing Walk hailed overwhelming success



THE first Warrington Wellbeing Walk involving a collaboration of mental health charities and organisations in the town has been hailed an overwhelming success by organisers.

More than 70 participants turned up at the event at Moore Nature reserve bringing together many of the mental health charities and supporting organisations in the town, helping break down the stigma about mental health.

One of the organisers, Lee Payton from Andy's Man Club said: "Firstly, our sincere thanks to all who supported, participated, or contributed to the walk. It's safe to say what an overwhelming success our first walk has been!

"The collaboration of all the mental health charities and organisations has been incredible, and the support and awareness it has generated has

been fantastic.

"Our mission was to raise awareness, and we believe we have accomplished our main objectives.

"It has been a difficult journey and task, to create an event such as this, but without your support this couldn't be possible.

"So, on behalf of all the team associated with the Warrington Wellbeing Walk, our sincere thanks yet again.

"What an incredible turnout!!!"

Details for planned events going forward will be made available in due course, with the aim of ensuring the event does not clash with any individual group's arrangements etc.

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St Rocco's raises over £40,000 from Christmas tree collection



AROUND 90 volunteers travelled across Warrington to pick up Christmas trees for St Rocco's 12th annual tree collection campaign.

This year, to commence the 40th year celebrations, a record-breaking 2,700 trees were collected from supporters who booked a collection amongst the community, raising an incredible £42,773 towards patient care at the hospice.

Charlotte, Senior Events Manager, said "As St. Rocco's Hospice is a local charity, we rely on the generosity of the Warrington community for most of our funding. Your donations for this event have helped us raise an incredible £42,773 and this money will go directly to caring for patients and their loved ones. We couldn't have achieved this without the help of our volunteers and the businesses who helped on the day, and we are so grateful for all their hard work."

"A huge thank you to all the companies and volunteers who supported this event including: Our Volunteers, Warrington Borough Council, ADS Recycling, B-Engineering Group, Beesley & Fildes, Buzz Building Services, CEF, Colas, PSD Vehicle Rental, Sandstone Supplies, Urban Garden Projects, Warrington Electrical Supplies, DPD Pressure Cleaning, 5 Star Catering, HMS, EFG European Furniture Group, LWC Drinks Company, Inco Contracts, John K Phillips, Beechwood Industries, Holly Oak Tree Services, Warrington Sports Club, Birchwood High School, Reddish Farm, Lymm, Brostons Environmental.

To find out more about St. Rocco's up-coming events this year visit, www.stroccos.org.uk/events-campaigns.

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Double Cab Pick-Up Tax Changes – What to Know Before April 2025

Understanding the Tax Changes

From April 2025, double-cab pick-ups will no longer be classified as commercial vehicles, resulting in significant tax increases for some owners. With these changes on the horizon, it is crucial to determine how they may impact you before they take effect.

What Are the UK Pick-Up Truck Tax Changes?

From April next year, double-cab pick-up trucks will be classified as cars for tax purposes following the 2024 Autumn Budget.

A key impact of this change is on the benefit-in-kind (BiK) tax, which applies to goods and services provided to an employee at a reduced rate or for free. Currently, light commercial vehicles, including double-cab pick-ups with a carrying capacity of one tonne or more, are subject to a flat BiK tax rate of £3,960 annually for company drivers.

However, from April 2025, these vehicles will be taxed on a sliding scale based on their emissions, which could lead to significantly higher costs for company vehicle users. Given that most double-cab pick-ups have high-emission diesel engines, many drivers will face substantial tax increases.

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, including the **Basis Period Changes**. If you are **employed or self-employed** either as a sole trader, partnership or limited company, **or are subject to self-assessment due to rental or other untaxed income**, 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.

Example of the New Tax Changes

The financial impact of this change depends on the vehicle owned. For instance, company-owned double-cab pick-ups that fall into the highest BiK bracket for company cars could see annual tax charges rise to as much as £15,000 – nearly three times the current flat rate for light commercial vehicles. This shift could prove challenging for tradespeople who rely on these vehicles for their work.

What to Do if You Own a Double-Cab Pick-Up

If you already own a double-cab pick-up, HMRC has introduced transitional BiK tax arrangements for businesses that have purchased or leased these vehicles before April 2025.

Businesses that have ordered, purchased, or leased a double-cab pick-up before this date will be able to continue using the previous tax treatment. However, this transitional arrangement will only remain valid until:

- The vehicle is disposed of
- The lease expires
- 5th April 2029 (whichever comes first)

This provides some flexibility for existing owners before and after

the new tax rules take effect.

Effects of the Tax Changes on Businesses

Beyond increased taxation, these changes could significantly impact industries reliant on double-cab pick-ups, such as construction and farming. Employers will not only see increased tax liabilities for employees using these vehicles but also higher National Insurance contributions due to the BiK tax increases.

As a result, many businesses may reconsider their vehicle fleets. Some may opt for traditional vans, which will continue to benefit from lower BiK rates, while others might transition to electric vehicles (EVs) to take advantage of lower tax rates associated with reduced emissions.

Key Dates to Remember

- 1st April 2025 – Double-cab pick-ups will be classified as passenger cars for Corporation Tax purposes.
- 6th April 2025 – For Income Tax purposes, double-cab pick-ups will be classified as cars for BiK and profit deductions.

With these changes fast approaching, now is the time to review your vehicle choices



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

and tax liabilities to ensure you are prepared for the impact of the new regulations.

Millions Face Fines for Late Tax Returns

Over a million taxpayers will face an automatic £100 fine for failing to file their tax returns by the 31 January deadline. Despite a slight drop in total filings compared to the previous year, HMRC received 11.5 million returns on time, with 97.4% submitted online.

Around 732,498 people filed on deadline day, with the busiest hour between 16:00 and 16:59. However, 9.5% of taxpayers missed the deadline, meaning HMRC could collect around £110m in penalties.

HMRC is urging late filers to submit their returns as soon as possible to avoid escalating penalties. After three months, daily £10 penalties apply, while after six and 12 months, further 5% or £300 charges are imposed. Late payments also attract additional fines and interest at 7.25%.

If you are one of those that missed the deadline please get in touch to see if we can help get the returns up to date before the next stage of penalties kicks in at the end of April 2025.

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Warrington Wolves on the buses!

WARRINGTON Wolves has announced a new partnership with Warrington's Own Buses, making them the club's official travel partner.

As a key part of the community, Warrington's Own Buses shares the club's passion for the town and the club's supporters.

An end-of-season survey showed that 20% of Warrington Wolves' fans are using the town's buses to get to home matches at The Halliwell Jones Stadium – a 50% increase since 2019.

As part of the partnership, the club encourages fans to utilise public transport on match days. Keep an eye out for the club's branding on buses this season.

Warrington Wolves CEO Karl Fitzpatrick said: "We're thrilled to partner with Warrington's Own Buses and encourage our supporters to take advantage of their services on matchdays this season."

"We look forward to working together and making travel more

convenient for the Wire family."

Ben Wakerley, Managing Director of Warrington's Own Buses, said: "We have always been fans of Warrington Wolves and so this exciting new partnership takes it to the next level. Here's to a great season ahead."

Warrington Borough Council has capped bus fares of £2 for all adult single journeys and £1 for all single journeys made by under 22's.

First launched in 2022, as part of Warrington's Better by Bus programme, the low fares have proved to be extremely popular with passengers – and they are now continuing until at least the end of 2025, despite January's national fare cap increase from £2 to £3. The council is now carrying out further work to explore keeping low fares in place in 2026 and beyond.



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