

Insight

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The Journal of the

WARRINGTON CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

in association with
VR VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire

Student steams ahead to his dream job

A WARRINGTON student who finished college only last year has taken the fast track to securing his dream job.

Caleb Lovegrove, who studied at Priestley College, is now busy building, maintaining and fixing steam engines of all sizes from across the world.

The 19-year-old said: "This is pretty much my dream job because steam locomotives have always been a very large part of my life.

"I spent lots of time watching and riding the world famous Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways when I was younger and seeing these beautiful engines work I just knew what I wanted to do."

It was with this career in mind that the former Bridgewater High School pupil chose his STEM-related subjects at Priestley.

He opted for Engineering, 3D Product Design, Mathematics and BTEC Applied Science while also continuing to volunteer on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways.

It was his volunteering that brought him to the attention of

Simon Hudson who offered Caleb a job at his West Yorkshire steam workshop as soon as he finished college.

"I jumped at the chance to carry on doing something that I love, but this time getting paid for it," said Caleb.

"The STEM subjects I studied gave me the grades that are needed in this day and age, but my four years volunteering gave me the

grounding I needed for my job."

Caleb is currently restoring a 1924 Fowler locomotive – an Australian Tully Sugar Mills engine that used to pull sugar trains from the fields in the Outback.

The workshop bought the rusty heap after it was found in a field in Australia and hope to have it fully restored by 2024, in time for its 100th anniversary.

"Hopefully we can take it back out to the Tully Sugar Mills and have fun with it on its original railway," Caleb said.

Mark Eccleston, 3D product design tutor at the college, said: "Caleb's passion and talent for locomotives was always obvious to see so it's great to hear he is doing so well and making a difference in this industry."



New Commercial Director appointed at Vistry Partnerships

LEADING Warrington-based regeneration specialist Vistry Partnerships has announced the appointment of Nathan Astley as its new Commercial Director for the North West region.

Having worked in the industry for more than 35 years, Nathan has a wealth of experience and he joins the team from Create Construction where he was Pre-Construction Director, having previously held the position of Commercial Executive at Styles and Wood for more than five years.

The new Commercial Director will join Vistry's regional office

based in Warrington, and upon appointment, Nathan expressed his enthusiasm for the new role: "Although I have joined the company at a very unusual time, I am really looking forward to the challenge ahead.

"Vistry Partnerships has continuously led the way in delivering new homes and bespoke communities, but our work is far from complete. We are on a journey to secure profitable growth and, in order to achieve this, I'm looking to strengthen the Commercial team and to work with my fellow Directors

to drive significant process improvements."

Vistry Partnerships' Divisional Managing Director for Central and North, James Warrington, commented: "We are delighted to welcome Nathan to our dynamic team."

"Despite the economic challenges facing the UK, we are standing on the brink of a huge opportunity for housing and development and Vistry Partnerships is perfectly placed to develop the partnerships, joint ventures, and deliver the schemes that will turn this into a reality for people in the

North West. Nathan's appointment reflects our commitment to this vision, and we believe he can help us continue to go from strength to strength."



New pizza restaurant in Golden Square will create 15 jobs

A new pizza restaurant is set to open in Warrington's Golden Square Shopping Centre on 12 April, creating 15 hospitality jobs in the process as well as speciality pizzas for Vegans.

Chester-based food group Pheby Food Concepts Group Ltd has taken over the glass-fronted former Prezzo building in Old Market Place, and is set to reopen it as its third Dough Dough wood-fired pizza restaurant and takeaway. As well as using local contractors to refit the building, PFC Group Ltd will create 15 new roles for hospitality workers in the Warrington area.

"The hospitality industry has been hit incredibly hard in the past year," said PFC Group Ltd owner Des Pheby. "However our brands have weathered the storm well thanks to our early adoption of

'ghost' or dark kitchens (a kitchen set up for food delivery only). So I'm delighted that we're now in a position to be expanding our Dough Dough brand with the launch of a new site in Warrington, and with it, the creation of jobs for local people."

Dough Dough has two further sites in Chester and Liverpool, with a fourth opening soon in Derby.

The Warrington site will open on 12 April – the same day the government's 'Roadmap out of Lockdown' aims to have all hospitality venues open to serve customers outdoors, with no curfew and no requirement to have a substantial meal in order to have an alcoholic drink. All customers must order via table service however.

Seating up to 40 customers outside, Dough Dough Warrington

will have covered, heated alfresco areas available to pre-book, perfect for enjoying a meal or drink whatever the weather.

"Dough Dough restaurants are all about good times with good people and we think the good people of Warrington will love what we have to offer them,"

added Mr Pheby. Just last week Dough Dough announced it now has products on its menu which have been certified with The Vegan Society's Vegan Trademark. Dishes including the Vegan Margarita and Vegan Ortolana will carry the Vegan Trademark on Dough Dough's menus.



From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



Spring is in the air and nature's seasonal optimism is helping us all feel better about the months ahead. The Prime Minister's road map means that many of our members can start planning when and how they will be trading again – those hairdressers are going to be busy! Financial support from central government has thankfully continued to flow, with 2,500 businesses receiving £21.5 million from Warrington Council between November and March. Further funding is on the way with Restart Grants from April and the Welcome Back Fund for the high street. It can never be enough for our struggling companies, however it's welcome all the same.

Some winter clouds have continued to linger, however, and

Brexit is the one that concerns us most at the Chamber. Recent reports suggest that trade has fallen by 41% this year already, with food & drink especially affected across the Irish Sea – sector share has reduced from 18% to just 5% compared to 2020. Globally, the price of containers has reached eye-watering levels with one member reporting increased prices from \$2,000 to \$16,000. They estimate the total extra cost at a staggering \$20 million! We continue to feed in intelligence to government through the Local Enterprise Partnership so please continue to contact us with your own experiences.

Despite these challenges, we do encourage our local companies to trade and the benefits are

well documented. A Barclays Corporate Banking survey suggested that customers in India (64%), China (57%) and UAE (48%) would pay a premium for British products so the financial rewards are clear. One initiative we are working on to inspire the next generation of exporters is to send a hamper of locally made beverages to Papua New Guinea, welcoming them ahead of their stay in Warrington for the Rugby League World Cup in October. The British High Commissioner in Port Moresby is looking forward to serving drinks from Warrington Chamber members including Quintessential Brands (Greenall's), Nicholls (Vimto) and Thomas Hardy Brewing (Fever Tree and many others).

Finally, some of you will have taken advantage of the on-line events that the Business Exchange has been running and this partnership will continue when we can meet face to face. We will also include Birchwood Forum in the future as we look to expand our business support community. Look out for a joint Warrington Business Conference on the 14th October – watch this space!

Businesses urged to donate laptops to help kids at school

BUSINESSES across Warrington are being urged to donate unused laptops to help disadvantaged children and young people to do their school work during the pandemic.

Warrington Borough Council has joined forces with Laptops for Kids – a charitable organisation that facilitates the donation, secure erasure, and distribution of used digital devices – to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds, so they can access the technology they need to participate in remote learning.

At the start of the pandemic, schools had to close and adapt to providing digital remote learning to the majority of pupils, even though some young people weren't able to access to the internet at home.

Council chief executive Professor Steven Broomhead said: "We want to ensure that every child has safe access to the internet so they can fulfil their educational potential. In a time of national crisis, the public and private sectors in Warrington came together to help solve this problem.

"I'd like to thank the businesses

that have donated equipment so far and urge all local businesses to donate anything they can to the project. We need your continued support to help close this digital divide."

Laptops for Kids has been running similar projects across the country, supported by local authorities and businesses, to ensure young people who may be at risk of falling behind with their education to have access to the internet and equipment at home to support their learning.

So far, businesses such as Jacobs, Vaultex, and Sellafield Ltd have donated a total of 465 laptops, desktop computers, and other pieces of equipment to support the scheme and some of Warrington's more vulnerable children.

Jacobs senior vice president, Clive White said: "The pandemic has made us all more aware that some children need much better access to IT if they are to succeed at school. We are supporting this excellent initiative as part of our commitment to deliver social and economic benefits to the communities where we operate."

For more information about Laptops for Kids, visit lftk.co.uk/warrington. If your business would like to donate, or if you would like to find out more about the

project, please complete the survey at smartsurvey.co.uk/s/wbclaptopsforkidsproject or email the council's education team at education@warrington.gov.uk



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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

Virtual Apprenticeships & Jobs Fair hailed huge success

WARRINGTON & Co's seventh annual Apprenticeships & Jobs Fair – the first to be held virtually – has been hailed a huge success.

The event- which gives businesses the opportunity to showcase their employment and apprenticeship opportunities to students and school leavers – took place this year on Wednesday 6 March. The current restrictions meant that the usual physical event at the Engine Rooms, Birchwood Park, was replaced by a special online event.

While the Birchwood event is always popular – usually attended by around 900 young people – moving to a digital platform meant there were no restrictions on how many could attend – and as a result, the numbers soared.

'Learn Live', who hosted the virtual event on behalf of Warrington & Co, has provided the following data:

- Live viewers – 3,755
- On Demand views – 2,412
- Devices used – Laptop 68%,

Tablet/Phones 29% Other 2%

· Top locations: Warrington, Manchester, Liverpool, Crewe and Chester

Particularly aimed at 16-18 year-olds who are looking to enter employment this year, the event saw companies promoting entry level job vacancies and apprenticeship programmes, in a range of sectors and specialisms.

Each company prepared a short video introduction, usually a Q&A with an existing apprentice. These were pre-loaded and shown during the two-hour event. Alongside this, viewers were invited to engage in "live chat" to ask questions, which representatives of the businesses were on hand to answer.

Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Economic development and innovation, Cllr Tom Jennings, said: "It's so important that we give our young people all the support we can in starting their careers, particularly in the current climate. Our Apprenticeships & Jobs Fair is an

important part of the work we do to open up new opportunities for our school leavers and students.

"I'm delighted that this year's event has been such a huge success. To see thousands of young people from across the borough and beyond joining the virtual event and connecting with some of the region's biggest firms is great news all round – for our young people, for companies looking for talented new recruits, and for our economy."

Sponsors for this year's event are The Pledge, United Utilities and Sellafield. Companies at the event represented a range of sectors, including accountancy, business administration, construction, customer services, design, engineering, health & social care, childcare, hospitality & catering, HR, IT & Communications, logistics and marketing.

If you missed the event, the videos are still available to view at jobsliveuk.com/warrington-apprenticeships-jobs-live/



Daresbury Laboratory launches facility aimed at developing new cancer treatments

A new facility that will increase capacity for testing new radiotherapy technologies for cancer treatments has been launched at The Science and Technology Facilities Council's (STFC) Daresbury Laboratory.

Varian Medical Systems will use the facility to scale up the testing of its advanced linear accelerator technology, which allows clinicians to deliver accurate, highly targeted doses of radiation to treat a range of cancers. These include cancers of the lung, prostate, breast, brain, spine, liver, pancreas, bone, among many others. As an essential part of the manufacturing process, these radiotherapy machines require specialist testing carried out by highly skilled technicians. Importantly, this testing must be performed in a radiation-protected environment due to the amount of radiation generated.

For the last two years, Varian, a leading developer of medical devices, has conducted this testing at Daresbury Laboratory, located at Sci-Tech Daresbury in the Liverpool City Region. Here it has been using the existing radiation-protective infrastructure and the technical expertise available on-site to carry out this essential work. However, increased requirement to manufacture more of these radiotherapy machines has required Varian to upscale its testing capacity.

Designed and built in collaboration with a team of experts at Daresbury Laboratory, the new, bespoke testing facility enables Varian to

more than triple its testing and manufacturing capacity. This has led to the creation of five new jobs at Daresbury Laboratory as well as new jobs at the Varian site in Crawley.

Paul Vernon, Head of STFC's Daresbury Laboratory, said: "Daresbury Laboratory has pioneered particle accelerators throughout its 60-year history. These systems are highly complex but are proving to be essential technology for the development of new generation radiotherapy systems for treating cancer. I am thrilled that, in collaboration with Varian, our on-site team here at Daresbury has the

expertise and experience to design and build this vital safe testing facility to meet Varian's requirements. Furthermore, this was all completed to a very tight timescale under the pressure of Covid-19 restrictions. This has been a tremendous effort by our team and is a great opportunity to support industry through access to our world-class science and facilities which, in turn will benefit our economy and the health and wellbeing of our society."

Andy Partridge, Vice President APAC EMEA Manufacturing at Varian said: "By working with STFC's Daresbury Laboratory, Varian will now produce and

test many more HalcyonTM radiotherapy systems within the UK. This work leads to increased productivity, the creation of new jobs and supporting the development of cancer treatment. Our ground-breaking Halcyon system combines fast and high-quality treatments with comfort and convenience, all of which come together to optimise the patient experience in the fight against cancer. This collaboration is a fantastic platform for joint innovation and is already helping us to accelerate the development of new products and solutions for our customers."



University unveils its planned move into Warrington town centre

THE University of Chester has revealed more details of its plan to move its Warrington Campus into the town centre.

Over the next 18 months its teaching provision will be relocated from the existing campus at Fearnhead – popularly known as the “Padgate Campus” – to two town centre sites.

The university has now completed the purchase of a property on Barbauld Street and has agreed terms for a lease of a new unit in Time Square.

The Time Square space will be refurbished and equipped to be operational from mid-September and is to be the “shop front” for the University in Warrington.

It will host an information point for members of the public to engage and understand the learning opportunities available from the University. It will also include bookable learning space for students with laptops and digital resources, breakout spaces for seminars and a small lecture space for talks and events.

This town centre location will also work with partners to showcase the opportunities available for both learners and businesses and will include offers from Further Education partners and key business support programmes, such as the Accelerate skills programme, working with Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership.

It is proposed that the former office building on Barbauld Street currently called ‘Mersey Bank House’ will house the majority of the teaching provision, namely Education and Nursing, and will be renamed the “Sarah Parker Remond Building.”

Significantly, this announcement is being made today to coincide with International Women’s Day.

The University has decided to name its new building after Sarah Parker Remond (1826-1894), a prominent black anti-abolitionist and women’s rights campaigner from America, who after arriving in Liverpool, was hosted in Warrington and gave a series of lectures at Warrington Music Hall and the Red Lion Hotel.

Her first lecture, free to enter, was described by contemporary accounts as the best attended public event in the town’s history and following the lecture series she spoke of the reception and sympathy she had found in Warrington. Remond’s speeches and writings also speak of her wider commitments to education, human rights and women’s suffrage and her later career as a doctor enabled her to put these into action.

By naming the building after Remond the university signals a continuing link with Warrington and the local community.

Professor Eunice Simmons, vice-chancellor, said: “The university’s desire to grow its Warrington presence in the heart of the town is aligned to its Citizen Student strategy to provide a ‘premium, personalised and purposeful’ experience to its learners. The town centre location helps to realise the ambition to broaden the reach and accessibility of the University in Warrington whilst supporting Warrington Borough Council to focus on areas of growth, providing strategic support for the post-COVID economic and cultural recovery.”

The borough council’s cabinet member for Economic Development

and Innovation, Cllr Tom Jennings, said: “This is great news for the ongoing growth of the heart of our town. The purchase of the Mersey Bank House building by the University of Chester will serve as another excellent addition to a bustling town centre and will bring footfall and further business to Time Square and other businesses in the area.

“This move complements the university’s recent announcement that it will be establishing a new information and learning hub at Time Square.

“Their decision to establish key academic locations in Warrington is testament to the tremendous progress being made here and

is another really important step forward, as we continue the development of our town centre.”



New R&D support programme gives material boost to Warrington businesses

BUSINESSES in Warrington are being invited to take advantage of a new project that puts world-class materials expertise and facilities at their fingertips at no extra cost.

The support comes from the Greater Innovation for Smarter Materials Optimisation (GISMO) programme, delivered by Lancaster University and part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

GISMO helps businesses to improve the performance of surfaces, coatings, bulk materials and chemicals in their products and processes and to develop their capabilities in additive manufacturing (3D printing).

The programme provides fully-

funded access to the experts and a cutting-edge suite of specialist equipment in the Materials Science Institute at Lancaster University.

Professor Rob Short, Director of the Materials Science Institute, said: "We are delighted to be involved in this programme. GISMO provides you with an excellent opportunity to enhance your research and development capacity by working closely with our experts at Lancaster University. And conversely, it provides my staff and I with a wonderful opportunity to work with SMEs.

"Our knowledge of the latest developments in materials and our state-of-the-art facilities can help you to improve the effectiveness of your products

and processes, test and develop materials, find new materials and formulations, trial new processes and technologies and develop and build prototypes."

GISMO Project Manager, James Stancombe, said: "The project is open to businesses across all sectors. We can help whether you aim to break new ground, exploit emerging technologies, make the most of your existing approach or need help to solve a pesky problem.

"Even if you want to put your products and processes to the test or simply find out about the latest developments in materials

science, we encourage you to get in touch."

GISMO has hosted a number of successful webinars since its launch last year, allowing businesses to gain insight into Lancaster University's research in materials and to show how the experts and specialist facilities in the Materials Science Institute can help to improve their products and processes.

More information about GISMO and upcoming events is available by visiting www.smarter-materials.co.uk or by calling James Stancombe on 01524 510464.



STEM is the future, says former Warrington student

A FORMER Warrington college student – who now works on projects in support of the Royal Navy – says Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) will play a vital role in the UK's future.

Duncan Cathie, who studied A-Levels at Priestley College, is now on Babcock International's Graduate Project Management Scheme and is based at Devonport Royal Dockyard in Plymouth.

In a zoom talk to Priestley's STEM

students, he said there was huge demand for people in their areas of study.

"At a time when there are major infrastructure programmes underway at sites like Devonport and a growing drive for a greener economy, STEM knowledge is going to be incredibly important to meet the challenges we face," he said.

After completing his A-Levels at Priestley, and spending two years as a student intern at the college,

Duncan studied International Politics and Security at the University of Salford, finishing with a 2:1.

For the next two years at Babcock he will transfer every three to six months, working in different areas of the business as he aims to secure his Project Management Chartership.

In his talk to the students at Priestley, which is a STEM-assured college, meaning its provision in these areas is among the top 10

per cent in the country, he shared his tips for succeeding after education.

"Most businesses find it challenging to recruit into STEM posts, which means there are lots of opportunities out there for anyone pursuing careers in these areas," said Duncan.

"STEM continues to power growth right across the globe and there has never been a better time to embark on careers in this field."



Employers to receive up to £4,000 per apprentice as part of 2021 Budget announcements



EXCITING news for employers considering employing an apprentice in 2021 as it was announced by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on the 3rd March that there would be an extension of the current apprenticeship incentive scheme to September 2021 alongside an increase in the value of the cash incentives. The boost to the value of the incentives means that employers looking to hire apprentices can benefit to a payment between £3,000 and £4,000 per hire!

£3,000 per apprentice hire – employers in England will be able to claim £3,000 for each new apprentice they hire, of any age. From 1st April – 30th September 2021.

£4,000 per apprentice hire – for employers hiring new apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is due to the additional existing £1,000 payment already in place. From 1st April – 30th September 2021.

Further notable plans for employers outlined in the budget, include:

- £7 million fund available from July 2021 for a new “flexi-job” apprenticeship programme

in England, that will enable apprentices to work with a number of employers in one sector/industry.

- Additional £126 million for 40,000 more traineeships in England, funding high quality work placements and training for 16-24 year olds in 2021/22 academic year.
- High street shops and hospitality businesses will be able to get ‘restart’ grants when they reopen later this year.
- An extension of the Coronavirus Job Support Scheme to September 2021 across the UK.
- £5 billion for new Restart Grants – a one off cash grant of up to £18,000 for hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses in England.
- Extension to the VAT cut to 5% for hospitality, accommodation and attractions across the UK until the end of September, followed by a 12.5% rate for a further six months until 31 March 2022.
- 750,000 eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will benefit from business rates relief.

Commenting on the announcement, Karl Rogers, Head of Business Development at Warrington & Vale Royal College, said:

“After what has been a challenging year for employers it is great to see the government recognising the importance of apprenticeships and the value they can add to a business by encouraging more employers to recruit apprentices into their organisation.

As a college we see many of our vocational students’ progress from their full-time courses at the college onto apprenticeships and hopefully this improved incentive scheme will provide even more opportunities for our work ready students to take their first step into the world of work.

If you would like to discuss what is involved in hiring an apprentice and find out more about how these government incentives work, please contact our Apprenticeships Team to book an appointment.”

Boost employee performance and retention

Did you know you can use apprenticeships to upskill and retrain your existing workforce?

You can use apprenticeship

training to:

- Fill key skill gaps in your business
- Boost employee motivation by investing in their development
- Improve retention

For example, an experienced employee may be keen to get a formal qualification in their specialist area.

Or perhaps someone has the aptitude and drive to learn something new and progress into a different role?

There are apprenticeships from level 2 to level 7 (equivalent to a degree) so you will be able to find apprenticeships that suit the learning and development needs of your employees.

Apprenticeships are designed by employers so they reflect the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours that your business needs.

If you would like to find out more about the financial incentives and benefits associated with employing an apprentice contact the Apprenticeships Team at Warrington & Vale Royal College on 01925 494271 or apprenticeships@wvr.ac.uk

Driveworks receive £4m investment to help deliver global growth

WARRINGTON-based double Queen's award-winner, DriveWorks has received a £4m investment from BGF – the UK's most active growth capital investor.

The fast-growing technology company that works with manufacturing and engineering businesses to provide innovative design automation and 3D sales product configuration software solutions was co-founded by CEO Glen Smith and VP Maria Sarkar in 2001.

Together they helped create DriveWorks software as a design tool to automate SOLIDWORKS, the world's leading 3D CAD design platform. With an already established userbase in the US, DriveWorks' technology has truly global reach and is utilised by thousands of customers across 47 countries.

BGF's funding will support continued investment in technology to accelerate growth and position the business to address the significant market

demand for customised 3D product visualisation in an increasingly virtual world.

Commenting on the deal, co-founders Glen Smith and Maria Sarkar said: "Our company is built on innovative technology, high standards and above all else the quality and commitment of our people to our customer base and channel partners.

"With BGF's support, we have an opportunity to build on our growth with continued investment in our software and focus on international expansion into new and existing markets. We've been impressed with BGF and their expertise in supporting the scale-up of technology businesses in our sector which will be key to achieving our ambitions for DriveWorks."

Harry Jones from BGF originated and led the deal. He said: "DriveWorks is an excellent business with unique and world-leading technology which has significant global potential to help manufacturing companies

generate more sales whilst also driving efficiencies in their production processes. We have also been impressed by the founders' commitment to their team and investing in talent within the business which gives a strong cultural alignment between our organisations. All of these elements, combined with our support, investment and attractive sector fundamentals, mean DriveWorks is primed to scale its operations."

"This is a sector BGF knows

well having previously backed Solid Solutions – the UK's largest reseller of SOLIDWORKS, in 2016 which more than tripled revenues through significant organic and acquisitive growth over a four-year period before a successful exit last year."

The advisors to the transaction were: Knights (Legals for BGF), DTM Legal (Legals for Management), Mattocks Grindley (Financials for Management) and Hurst (Tax DD).



Firm aims to give £1m grants to community health projects

A WARRINGTON-based property specialist has revealed its ambition to pass the £1 million mark in distributing grants to community health projects over the next year.

Assura – which works as long-term property partner to almost 600 primary health care buildings – launched its Assura Community Fund in May and made more than £800,000 in grants last year.

It plans to distribute a further £500,000 this year, continuing the focus on supporting charities and community organisations to deliver projects which tackle the long-term health impacts of the pandemic such as loneliness, financial instability and digital exclusion.

Assura has also hailed the work of primary care professionals who have been on the front line of the national response and vaccination programme. Over the last year, the company has put vacant space into use for respiratory care, made land available for extra staff parking and helped GP practices make temporary reconfigurations for social distancing and one-way systems for patients.

Just under 10 per cent of Assura's medical centre sites have been registered as NHS vaccination centres and have played their part in the national vaccine roll out, and Assura has completed 10 new healthcare building projects since the first national lockdown to add modern capacity for local health services in places including Kent, Birmingham and Nottingham.

Chief executive Jonathan Murphy said: "The last year has given us a unique perspective on just

how much daily activities have changed for the people and teams using our buildings up and down the country, and the many examples we've seen of primary care's incredible resilience and little kindnesses to keep people smiling and to support colleagues have been truly inspiring.

"It's never been so important to be looking after each other

and the projects the Assura Community Fund has supported are all about reaching those who are most vulnerable to health inequalities and challenges. In an unprecedented year of lockdowns and the constant need to adapt, this has been a real highlight and we can't wait for the next round of grants to continue our support for grassroots health causes."

The Assura Community Fund is managed by Cheshire Community Foundation.

Chairman of the foundation and Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, David Briggs said: "Assura's commitment to the communities in which they work is outstanding and inspiring. Their generous support will undoubtedly change many lives for the better."



One woman's determination helps create world leading metal recycler

ON International Women's Day 2021 Warrington-based EMR told the story of one woman's determination which helped create a world-leading metal recycler.

Global leading metal recycler, EMR has a heritage dating back to the 1950s. At the origin of the business is the story of one woman's dream of a better life for her family.

In the 1940s, Winifred Sheppard left wartime London for the relative safety of Rochdale after a bomb destroyed the factory where she worked and her job was relocated to Greater Manchester. With her husband and children, Winifred started the business that is known today as EMR, in central Rochdale.

EMR's story began with one woman's determination.

On International Women's Day, Samantha Grierson Schwarz, EMR's Director of Change and Chair of EMR's Inclusion Steering Group, explains what EMR is doing to encourage more women into the metal recycling industry.

When you think of metal recycling, you may have in mind an industry that is male-dominated. You are not wrong.

Throughout my career, working in construction and now the metal recycling industry, I have found myself surrounded by male colleagues, largely due to the low numbers of women in these industries. I can honestly say that I have never found my gender as a factor detrimental to my success. However, this is not a sentiment shared by women globally.

The question arises, what are the obstacles preventing women from pursuing a career in these industries? An article published by International Women's Day illustrated how inflexible working

environments prove a big barrier for women who look to balance their careers with family life.[1] Part-time working, job shares, remote working and maternity/paternity benefits are increasingly offered and frequently reviewed with the aim of increasing female participation in the workplace. After all, 'women belong in all places where decisions are being made'.[2]

So how can we encourage more women into employment, especially in to industries traditionally viewed as being a male territory?

From a young age we are conditioned to believe that there are certain roles for men and certain roles for women. This is simply not true and we must break down these stereotypes. We must celebrate the individuals in roles that are not traditionally perceived as open to them, sharing the positive experiences which they have had within these positions. With this we show their peers that their aspirations are attainable.

It is also important for businesses to review the way that positions are advertised and recruited. Unconsciously there is a tendency to use language which can be uninviting for women. Many businesses, like EMR, now use their recruitment process to highlight their commitment to equality in the workplace and at EMR we aim to ensure that recruitment decisions are made solely on experience and talent.

However, creating an inclusive environment where everyone wants to continue working is about more than just policies and hiring practices, it's an ongoing environment where everyone brings their whole self to work each day and feels valued, heard and able to make an impact while progressing their careers.

At EMR, we are working hard to create an environment where women can achieve their potential. Our culture is described by 'The EMR Way' – 'We Care' and 'We Do'. It's built on our values of 'caring' about what we do and getting the job 'done' for our customers and suppliers. These principles and values guide all of our actions and decisions. We ask that all of our employees uphold our values, try to inspire them in others and hold us to account if we fall short of them, so we can learn and improve.

As a woman working for EMR, I am proud to see that the company is already on the journey to ensuring the workplace is as inclusive as possible. To continue to build a

more equal and inclusive future, our Learning and Development Team are already working hard to educate and better equip people for jobs, addressing skill-gap shortages and developing clear career plans to develop people and to keep them.

Our newly formed Inclusion Steering Group can only further the discussion and the development of a more inclusive environment where everyone can prosper.

It was one woman's determination that created the EMR we know today. EMR's heritage and family values certainly shape the business, and I am proud to say I work for a company that aims to treat everyone equally and that puts their people first.



Two more accolades for the award-winning Warrington Market

THE award-winning Warrington Market has collected two further national accolades including "Team of the Year".

These new achievements are courtesy of the country's leading market organisation, the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA), as part of their 'Market Hero' awards.

Warrington Market's management

team has taken top prize in the Team of the Year category and achieved Highly Commended status in the Innovation category for the digital table ordering system which provided a new way for customers to order and pay for food, drink and goods using any smart device.

Cllr Tom Jennings, Warrington Borough Council's cabinet member for economic development and innovation, said: "I would like

to offer my congratulations and praise to my council colleagues and everyone at the market who has worked so hard over the past year. The pandemic has certainly brought about its challenges, but in many ways, has brought out the best in people too. These awards recognise the dedication of the market team and the work they have done to help support over 50 of Warrington's independent retailers, in a new state-of-the-art facility that is a fantastic asset for the whole community to enjoy."

David Preston, Chief Executive of NABMA, said: "The judging panel was hugely impressed with the resilience, drive and professionalism of the Warrington Market team. Relocating a market is a major undertaking at the best of times, doing it during a major global pandemic is another thing altogether. It's a real testament to the dedication of the entire team."

closed its doors for the last time after 43 years in the summer of 2017, making way for the new Time Square development. After moving to a new temporary site in September 2017, now home to the Gravity Trampoline Park, traders finally moved in to their permanent, and purpose-built facility in the heart of Time Square in July 2020.

Warrington Market Manager, Andy Ward said: "No one could have predicted the challenges that lay ahead of us at the beginning of 2020, but we are a tightknit, hardworking team and we were determined to get this fabulous new facility open. It's been a massive effort and a huge success, so receiving recognition from our peers is a real boost for the whole team."

For more information about what's happening at Warrington Market, visit www.warrington.gov.uk/market, email markets@warrington.gov.uk or follow on social media @warringtonmkt



Back row (left to right) Market facilities team – Tina Turner, Adele Cassella, Tonio Cassella and Jane Taylor. Front row (left to right) Market management team – Cathy Beck, Paul Blaney, Andy Ward and Jay Seville.

The old market in Bank Street,

Hannah's message of hope for those with mental health issues

WARRINGTON student Hannah Bromley hopes that by sharing her own experiences in a new book she can help others who suffer with mental health issues.

Hannah, who studies at Priestley College, has written two chapters in the newly-published "My Intense Emotions Handbook" authored by psychologists Dr Sue Knowles and Dr Bridie Gallagher.

She said: "I hope that it will reach as many young people as possible who may be struggling with their feelings and emotions,

"It's not just for people who suffer from a mental health problem, but for anyone who feels like their emotions can take control. Ultimately, I want people to know that firstly it's ok to not be ok and secondly that they're not alone."

Hannah, whose A-Levels include Biology, Chemistry and Psychology, spoke at a conference in 2017 about her mental health journey and afterwards Dr Knowles promised to contact her if any suitable projects came up.

It was 18 months later when the idea for 'My Intense Emotions

Handbook' was put to Hannah who immediately understood its importance.

"I had battled with mental illness since the age of 12 and I remember someone recommending a book to help me," she said.

"It was full of small black writing on every page and used words such as 'nocent' (which apparently means guilt) and it went straight over my head. I wanted to be involved in creating a book that I knew many young people would benefit from because it was in an accessible form."

As well as writing her chapters Hannah, who previously attended New Horizons, contributed ideas for different skills and techniques that can be used to deal with mental health issues.

The 19-year-old said that as well as discovering how difficult it was to write a book, she also learned something about herself.

"It made me realise how far I had come," she said. "When you go from day to day you don't realise the progress you're making, it's only when something big happens

that you reflect on where you are now.

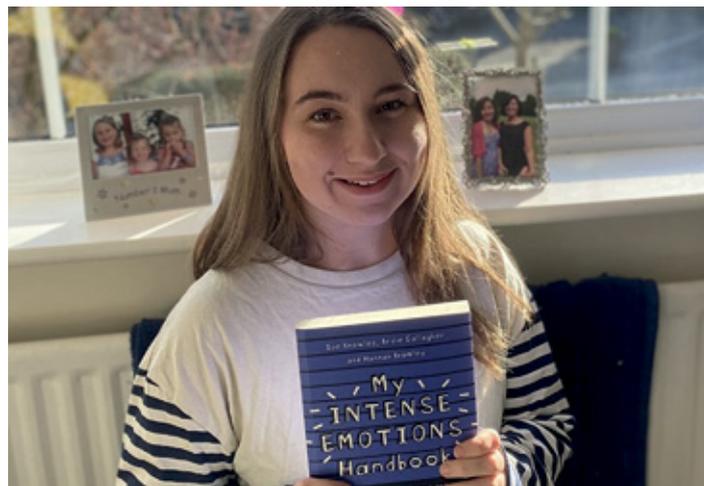
"Although I have been through some really hard times, those times have made me the person I am today."

Priestley College recently named Hannah one of its 'Priestley Heroes' in recognition of the contribution she has made to the

local community by volunteering as a SHOUT crisis line worker.

Assistant principal Mark Eccleston said: "We're very proud of Hannah and the way she is so committed to making other people's lives better. Her efforts are truly inspirational."

My Intense Emotions Handbook is available through Amazon, WH Smith and Waterstones.



Priestley College praised for the support and advice it gives to students

WARRINGTON'S Priestley College has met the international standard for organisations that provide information, advice and guidance.

The college was praised by the matrix standard inspector for the support and impartial advice it offers its 2,000 students on everything from careers to health and wellbeing.

Among the college's many strengths, he said, was its impressive partnerships with employers, universities and local schools.

In his report the assessor said Priestley had made "major strides in helping the wellbeing of students".

Assistant principal Mark Eccleston said: "To receive this seal of approval is something we are very proud of as a college.

"In particular we are delighted the inspector acknowledged that, despite everything that has happened over the past year, we have continued to successfully prioritise the futures and wellbeing of our students."

During the four-day inspection more than 60 members of staff were interviewed as well as 16 students and three partner agencies.

The inspector also analysed the college-produced literature

handed to students, parents and carers.

Ian Edge, one of Priestley's dedicated careers advisers, said: "The support we offer is delivered by a range of teaching and specialist staff. It begins with our work in schools, runs through a student's time with us and

continues to enable them to make their next successful step after leaving Priestley."

The matrix standard is used by the government to ensure organisations provide the highest quality information, advice and guidance.

When making a judgement, assessors consider not just the processes an institution has in place, but the results that are achieved.

Priestley College passed all six benchmarks for the accreditation and all 27 sub sections of the criteria to a high standard.



Cheshire and Warrington colleges build construction's digital future with grant from Local Enterprise Partnership

FURTHER Education colleges in Cheshire and Warrington have received a £260,000 grant from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to help implement digital skills in construction projects.

The grant will support the development of Advanced Construction Training (ACT) across Cheshire and Warrington, with the main hub situated at Warrington & Vale Royal College's Warrington campus and spokes at Cheshire College South and West, Macclesfield College, Reaseheath College and UTC Warrington.

Partner colleges, the UTC Warrington and employers will work together to develop, commercialise and promote digital technologies and skills training for the construction industry. The ACT

project will support the practical and commercial challenges faced by construction companies and support them to adopt digital and automated/ robotic construction techniques such as augmented and virtual reality, digital scanning of land and mass production through digital routers. In doing this, the project will assist the industry to build high-quality, smart, green, and efficient building infrastructures, faster, cheaper, and more sustainable than ever before.

New specialist equipment will enable the partner colleges to develop into sub-regional 'centres of excellence' for advanced construction that meets employers and the LEP's stated ambition to raise levels of productivity and innovation to compete at the

highest level. In addition to the partner colleges, the specialist equipment will be accessible to employers, other training providers and schools across Cheshire and Warrington and the sub-region.

Nichola Newton, Principal & Chief Executive of Warrington & Vale Royal College, said: "The investment from the LEP will enable the college to deliver enhanced digitalised construction training, ultimately supporting growth in the construction, nuclear and allied industries and meeting the need for digitally-skilled structural engineers and surveyors. The ACT will have great synergy with one of the college's other LEP-funded projects, our new AMET Centres, which focus on teaching digital and advanced engineering. Combined, the two

projects will closely align with the aspirations of the government's Transforming Construction Challenge".

Clare Hayward, chair of the Cheshire and Warrington LEP, said: "By improving access to digital skills training we are helping to create employment opportunities for local people and supporting businesses by addressing key skills gaps. ACT is one of three Warrington and Vale Royal projects to receive backing, bringing the total we have invested to £820,000 – this investment will positively impact individuals, businesses and therefore the region."

To find out more about Advanced Construction Training at Warrington & Vale Royal College, email ACT@wvr.ac.uk

Spotlight on Mode Digital Marketing

NEW Chamber members Mode Digital Marketing is a family run website design and digital marketing agency, that has been active for the last three years starting in February 2018.

Managing Director, Dean, has been a website designer and digital marketer for the past eight years, working for a number of large names including Tesco Mobile, PhD Nutrition and UP Fitness, then going onto founding MODE Digital Marketing which is continuing to flourish.

COVID has seen the increase in demand for digital services, especially for eCommerce websites as more and more people turn to online shopping. We anticipate that even with the nation returning the normal, this digital demand will continue to grow. As a result we have decided to join the Warrington Chamber of Commerce so local businesses have another option available to them to help their business either get started online or improve what they already have.

MODE Digital Marketing caters for SME's from all industries across the UK and although relatively new to Warrington, has already began to build a solid local client base which they wish to continue to grow and support local businesses further.

Services include:

- WordPress website design, including standard websites, eCommerce website and booking website to name a few.



- Search Engine Optimisation
- Pay-Per-Click management including search engine ads and social media ads
- Branding – from logo design, flyer design, stationary design and more.

We plan to become a firm favourite for local businesses in Warrington and excited to help these businesses grow online.

We are strong believers in our four core values of being trusted, good value for money, experts in our fields and the experience you receive when working with us.

We would also like to offer Chamber of Commerce members an exclusive discount of 10% off any website design. For more information please visit – www.modedigitalmarketing.com or email us – info@modedigitalmarketing.com



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"Staff are our greatest asset" says award winning firm

OVER the past few months, a Warrington-based firm has won three business awards, been nominated for two more and received another important accreditation.

But election software specialists Democracy Counts Ltd is most proud of its newly-received standard Investors in People award – because it shows that they appreciate their staff are their greatest asset.

Achieving its Investors in People (IIP) award during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant more than just a vote of staff confidence.

Chief executive Simon Verdon said: "Gaining IIP status at a time when so many businesses have been forced to make staff redundant or even close has been part of an ongoing mission for us to show that saving on employee wellbeing is a false-economy.

"We fully appreciate our staff are the greatest asset we have, and this is reflected in our IIP feedback which highlights a clear purpose

and vision, strong performance management, ownership and responsibility given to staff, and strong learning and development – all supported by a committed senior team.

"This matters to us, not just so we can add another gong to a trophy cabinet, but because there is an ethical case and financial benefit from investing in employees. In 2019, 70 million workdays in the UK were lost due to mental health issues, costing employers £2.4 billion – and this was before COVID-19 hit.

"Our headquarters are in Warrington, but as well as having staff working from home wherever possible in the present environment, we also have regional managers, sales, marketing and project teams operating in all corners of the UK.

"To keep performing effectively we believe it's vital to act as a unified organisation – meaning nobody gets left out or behind, no matter how far apart people might



Illumar appointments will drive ambitious growth strategy

WARRINGTON-based data management firm Illumar has appointed Peter Luke as commercial director and Jonathan Gould as client solutions consultant.

Illumar is a joint venture between Birchwood-based business services provider Inprova and data automation software specialists Insource. The platform, which was set up in October last year helps social landlords benefit from their data assets, driving improved business performance, tenant satisfaction and regulatory compliance.

Peter Luke joins from Liverpool-based tech firm Gas Tag where he was commercial director. He has more than 25 years' experience

developing solutions in asset management and operations and previously worked in central government outsourcing as business development director for Capita and at United Utilities in operational and commercial positions.

He will be responsible for executing an ambitious growth strategy in the social housing sector, working with existing and new customers to deliver their data management strategies.

Jonathan Gould has more than 16 years' experience in housing and local government, both directly for social landlords and councils and also in a consultant capacity. In previous roles at Ark Consultancy, Oxford City Council, Family

Housing Association and Orbit Homes, he managed major ICT and asset management projects.

As client solutions consultant, Jonathan will support housing providers to understand their data landscape and capability, collaborate in the design of data management solutions and deliver the housing data management platform to their organisation.

Illumar chief executive Steve Malone said: "Recruiting Peter

and Jonathan is an important step for Illumar. We have an ambitious product development road map for 2021, including the launch of an automated annual Statistical Data Return, a KPI automated reporting suite, a compliance dashboard and a data maturity and health check service. Peter and Jonathan will be critical to ensuring that Illumar products help the sector achieve the changes it needs to make around data integrity, as outlined by the housing regulator."



Student volunteers help out at college's Covid-19 test centre

STUDENT volunteers have been helping out at Warrington & Vale Royal College, rolling out a mass testing programme in their dedicated test centre, in order to welcome their fellow students safely back to campus.

As well as Warrington & Vale Royal College staff, four student volunteers also worked in the testing centre, helping to test thousands of returning students.

Level 3 Childcare student Hannah Hughes chose to work in the test

centre because it contributed towards the work placement element of her course. Hannah says, "I enjoyed interacting with all the students who came in to be tested, and I'm delighted to be back at college."

Level 3 Health & Social Care student Ellie Grant also opted to volunteer to build up hours towards the work placement component of her course. Ellie loved working in the test centre and says "Everybody was lovely and I was really well trained by the college staff."

Sarah Eaton, who is studying Level 1 Public Services, volunteered in the centre to gain work experience and boost her CV. She thoroughly

enjoyed her time volunteering, saying "It was the best experience ever. I got to learn new skills and gain an understanding of how to work in a health environment."

Stephen Coram, HNC Sport & Exercise Science student, worked in the test centre because it was a chance to do something completely different. He says "I volunteered because it sounded enjoyable and was a chance to gain some unique experience."

The college are delighted to have had the student volunteers on board and would like to thank them for their fantastic work ethic and the dedication they have shown throughout their time in the test centre.



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info@warrington-chamber.co.uk

College rugby players aim to convert opportunity

A TRIO of college rugby players from Warrington have been placed on a talent pathway they hope will lead to playing at the highest level of the women's game.

Shakira Westwood, Hattie Dogus and Izzy Hughes – all members of Priestley College's Rugby Academy – are on the RFL's government-funded Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) programme.

"This is an incredible opportunity for all three girls," said academy coach Lee Mitchell.

"They will get to train with other top athletes of their age as well as work towards a diploma that will carry weight when applying for university places."

The programme is aimed at talented young players who have been identified through regional Rugby League hubs across the north of England and south-east.

Those accepted learn what it takes to compete at the elite level, including technical and tactical elements of the games as well as physical and mental preparation.

The girls were among 30 who attended their first training session at Weetwood Hall, the England

Rugby League Performance Centre.

Former Beamont Collegiate Academy pupil Hattie, who has been playing rugby for 11 years, said it was 'unreal' to have been given the opportunity.

"Training with coaches to the current England women's squad was truly remarkable," she said.

"It felt like I was training for the World Cup myself. I really enjoyed it and I can't wait to go back for another session."

Priestley's rugby programme is run in partnership with Warrington Wolves and in 2020 was named the UK's first Dual Academy in recognition of how well both the girls and boys were doing.

The boys' team went through their last season unbeaten while the number of girls playing has more than doubled from nine to 20 this year.

Alongside their regular studies, Shakira, Hattie and Izzy will work towards achieving the Diploma in Sporting Excellence – a BTEC Level 3 qualification recognised by the university admissions service UCAS.

Hattie, who is studying Law, English and History at Priestley,

said being part of the programme made her rugby goals seem achievable.

"I'd love to play for my home town of Warrington as it's where my love

for rugby began," she said.

"I also have a true ambition to play for a team in Australia, this would be an achievement like no other."



Hattie Dogus, a member of the Priestley Rugby Academy, in action.

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