



# Insight

magazine

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The Journal of the

**WARRINGTON** CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

*in association with*  
**VR** VALE ROYAL  
The heart of Cheshire



# United Utilities recruits Warrington Wolves captain as apprenticeship ambassador

**LOCALLY based United Utilities has recruited Warrington Wolves Women's Rugby Captain Michelle Davis to help raise awareness for its apprenticeship programme.**

Michelle, who is breaking gender stereotypes and training to be a firefighter, recently visited United Utilities' Head Office in Warrington. During her visit, Michelle met current apprentices Jessica who is a scientist and Ethan who is a Credit Controller to see what their day-to-day life was like in action.

Currently there are 115 new apprenticeships open for application at United Utilities.

These apprenticeships will give candidates the chance to achieve nationally recognised qualifications, including degree-level, all while working alongside and learning from best in the business.

Apprentices could find themselves working on big, exciting projects in the engineering team; on a treatment plant; cooking up a storm in its state-of-the-art labs; working in the head office at Lingley Mere in Warrington or even out on the network fixing leaks.

There are also a variety of benefits that come with the United Utilities award-winning apprenticeship scheme, including private healthcare, discounted gym membership, up to 10 driving lessons – and many more! The apprenticeship programme starts at £15,000 salary – with this rising after the first year.

The majority of the new cohort will join in September 2022, but the company is looking for candidates into the Customer Service and Credit Controller apprentices over the coming weeks.

Michelle Davis, Captain of Warrington Wolves and United Utilities Apprenticeship Ambassador said: "It was fantastic to visit United Utilities and see the apprentices in action. If you want to start a career, or are after a career change, United Utilities apprenticeship programme is the place to look. There's a huge variety of roles available so make sure to visit the website and get applying!"

Julie McGovern, Head of People said: "At United Utilities we are committed to reaching and recruiting fantastic people from every community and supporting employees to achieve their full potential, ensuring they feel

valued and included, regardless of their gender, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, or social background.

We're delighted to have Michelle on-board as our ambassador to help us raise awareness for our apprenticeship programme. It was great to have Michelle come down to visit us at our offices recently

to meet our apprentices, talk about her own experience as one training to be a firefighter, and hear her words of encouragement for women looking to get into male dominated fields!"

Head to [www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/apprenticeships](http://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/apprenticeships) to find out more.

## Business support packages still available from "Internationalisation Fund"

FOR Warrington-based SMEs looking to start or expand sales of their products and/or services to customers beyond the UK your project costs may be eligible for the Department for International Trade (DIT) Internationalisation Fund.

Eligible SMEs with turnover of £500,000 per year (or nearing this) can apply for match-funded grants of between £1,000 and £9,000 towards proposed eligible future activities such as:

- PR
- Market Research

- Consultancy on IPR
- Translation / Cultural Advice
- Social Media and SEO
- Participation in trade shows
- Market development including visits
- Routes to Market
- Overseas Business Environment / Due Diligence

For an initial chat on the fund and your proposed project please contact Tricia Francis, DIT NW's Export Manager for Cheshire & Warrington LEP on [tricia.d.francis@tradenw.org](mailto:tricia.d.francis@tradenw.org)

# From the Chief Executive

Stephen Fitzsimons



On the one hand, it seems like a typical spring – hot weather quickly followed by forecasts of snow. However, we know it's not a typical spring because we are living in a post-Brexit, Covid managing, Ukrainian war affected world.

These "once in a generation" geo shocks are having a profound impact on Chamber members, dragging the UK economy back from its road to recovery. Inflation is up again to 6.2%, or 8.2% if we want to compare it to before 1996 when we used RPI as a measure. Every company we speak with is under the same pressures – commodity prices up, energy prices up, recruitment costs up. Conversations with government have been frustrating, with Ministers apparently waiting for

the energy market to "correct itself". Businesses always find a way to adapt, however it will ultimately mean less money to invest in extra staff, property and equipment.

In fairness to politicians and civil servants, if we don't tell them what our issues and opportunities are, they will never know. Birchwood Park is the centre of the UK's nuclear sector with most of the major companies headquartered there, including Sellafield, Cavendish and National Nuclear Laboratories. We recently hosted a delegation of visitors from the Cabinet Office, Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy and the Local Enterprise Partnership. It concluded with a tour of the Jacobs Engineering innovation centre and helped us

to ensure that Warrington is at the forefront of future initiatives and funding. Given the move away from Russian gas, we anticipate more developments in the sector in the months ahead.

We are still seeing those rising stars emerge from their individual sectors to hopefully become the major local employers of the future. Tactus of Olympic Park have just acquired another business, this time a £100m turnover one in the UK. They have been widely tipped to be a future "unicorn", characterised as being worth \$1 billion! We have also been working with Verde Spaces of Streatham and they have secured lucrative export deals with the Canadian military for their mobile command units. Overall, Warrington Chamber is issuing up

to 100% more export certificates than before the pandemic so although challenging, members are chasing new opportunities as best they can.

These remain strange and challenging times, however the numerous obstacles are being tackled as vigorously as always.

Have a lovely Easter.

Stephen.

## Student's voice heard on international podcast

**PRIESTLEY College student James Scanlan got a birthday surprise when he featured on a podcast with an international audience and two of the most well-respected BBC journalists at the helm.**

No wonder the Priestley College student was buzzing after he was heard asking a question on a recent edition of Americast.

"I was revising when I heard it and had to stop," he said. "I was laughing because I couldn't believe I was on Americast."

James, who also studies History and Media A-Levels at Priestley College, posed a question that was answered by journalists Emily Maitlis and Jon Sopel along with the BBC's senior North American reporter Anthony Zurcher.

Earlier they joked about how James, who is aiming for a career in politics, was planning to send in a question every week until one was discussed on the show.

"I got back from work on the Tuesday night and had a message from Americast saying they really

liked my question and would I record it for them," said James.

"I thought if it was used in that week's episode it would be a great birthday present for me."

It was, indeed, a great birthday present. The popular trio – whose knowledge and chemistry entertains and informs listeners every week – spent around 10 minutes on the 'Americast' as it is known to the podcast's listeners.

James had asked who they thought the rising stars in American politics were given the age of the current crop of leaders.

Among those namechecked as likely future presidential candidates were Ron Desantis, Mike Pompeo and Pete Buttigieg.

For James, a former pupil at Lymm High School, it was a great moment to hear his question answered, but he's not finished yet.

"I've messaged them saying I know my question can't be answered every week because everyone needs a chance, but if I

do have a good one I will send it in," he said.

"Then I asked 'who they think

Trump's running mate might be if he runs again in 2024?' so we will see if they answer that."



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Stephen Fitzsimons, Chief Executive

# Ending the Employment Relationship - Getting it right

**DSM Legal Solicitors is urging businesses in Warrington and Cheshire to review their policies and procedures to ensure that they do not fall foul of employment law when dismissing employees.**

The law states that a full and fair procedure must be followed when dealing with a grievance or disciplinary matter and the same applies in redundancy situations. Employees must be selected for redundancy in a fair way and it is crucial that a fair procedure is followed.

This includes careful consideration of selection criteria, the pool of employees and scoring.

The ACAS website [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) contains some useful information and guidance when dealing with redundancy, grievances or disciplinary matters or when considering dismissal.

The ACAS Code of Practice in particular provides guidance on disciplinary and grievance procedures by setting out the minimum process which an employer should follow.

Diane Massey of DSM Legal says: -

“If it becomes necessary to terminate an employee’s contract of employment, perhaps because of redundancy or for other reason, it is well worth considering offering them a Settlement Agreement, regardless of how long they have been employed by the Company.

Whilst an employee must have been employed for two years to be eligible to bring an unfair dismissal claim, there are many other claims that they can bring that do not require them to have a minimum length of service, such as breach of contract or discrimination claims.”

## What is a Settlement Agreement?

A settlement agreement is a legal document by which an employee agrees to give up their employment rights in exchange for a lump sum compensation payment from the employer. The settlement agreement will also include a confidentiality clause and requires that the employee withdraws any grievance or complaint, as well as agreeing not to bring any claims in the future.

## Why offer a Settlement Agreement?

A properly drafted legally binding settlement agreement can save the Company the time and expense of following formal procedures provided both parties agree. They can be a solution where an employee has been off sick for a considerable period of time and it has become apparent

that they are no longer able to do the job.

A settlement agreement is the most effective means of ensuring that a claim will not be brought against the Company or its officers in the future.



## Students play a role in professional production

DRAMA students have played their part in a new professional production set to wow audiences this month.

Eight students from Priestley College were given the opportunity to work with set designers, actors, stage managers and even the director of Not Too Tame’s eagerly-anticipated next production.

Jimmy Fairhurst, Artistic Director with the touring theatre company, said it had been a pleasure working with the talented young crew.

“They actively participated in helping us develop ideas for our new show whilst shadowing some of the theatre industry’s most exciting talent in both on and off stage roles,” he said.

“It’s really important for Not Too Tame to create opportunities and route maps into the professional industry and with the talent we see coming out of Priestley, and our support, we hope to see an influx of numbers working professionally in the North West and across the

UK.”

Among the Priestley students who shadowed the professionals was former Cardinal Newman RC High School pupil Megan Hollinshead.

She worked with the director, observing rehearsals in the hope of improving her own processes.

“I enjoyed observing the way in which the director and cast interacted and hope to add many of the leadership skills and also rehearsal techniques to my own theatre practices,” she said.

Not Too Tame had visited Priestley to answer questions from the college’s aspiring actors and back stage crew before running a workshop in the Costello Theatre.

They ran a second workshop which gave 24 students training in theatre school audition techniques and led to 19 of them auditioning for a casting director.

A selection of students were then invited to their Warrington studios to gain further experience.

Martha Podmore, who hopes to

secure a career in film, worked with the director and was inspired by the creation of one particular scene that was developed from a single line of dialogue.

“Whilst watching the scene that was created in such a small amount of time I was amazed by how much meaning could be conveyed with such a simple

idea,” said the former Birchwood Community High School pupil.

Priestley drama tutor Helen Lowe said the experience of working with a theatre company was invaluable for the students.

“You can’t put a price on the experiences our students have enjoyed thanks to our partnership with Not Too Tame,” she said.



# Multiple award nominations for Blue Whale Media

**BIRCHWOOD based digital agency Blue Whale Media has received multiple award nominations from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and North West Family Business Community.**

The first award Nomination came from the FSB Celebrating Small Business Awards, within the category Digital / Ecommerce Business of the year for the North West. This was the first-ever nomination for Blue Whale Media, which came as a massive honour for every team member.

FSB North West hosted their Awards on the 11th of March at the elegant Midland Hotel in Manchester, a delightful venue, steeped in history and soaked in luxury. Twelve fantastic businesses of different shapes and sizes were crowned as the winners; sadly, the Blue Whale Team missed out on a trophy but were still named in the final three for the Digital / Ecommerce Business of the year category.

"It's an honour to be nominated within such a competitive category; it just goes to show that our hard work is well received and worth being celebrated. This is our first award nomination which is something to be immensely proud of; the dedication we all put in deserves recognition, especially when we're creating digital solutions for our clients," said Rachel Foy, who is a Content Writer at Blue Whale Media.

"We met so many wonderful people at the awards ceremony at the Midland Hotel in Manchester; six of our staff attended, including myself and what a wonderful occasion it was."

In the last month, it was also announced that Blue Whale Media is a finalist for the People's Choice Cheshire category of the North West Family Business Awards 2022.

Blue Whale Media beat the strong competition with a record number of 186 businesses entering The North West Family Business Awards. This is only their second award finalist nomination, which is fantastic recognition for the digital agency and portrays an exciting year for the whole team.

The North West Family Business Awards are organised and run by The Family Business Community, described as a fantastic opportunity for people to celebrate from across the North West.

The finalists will now receive a visit from a specially selected expert judging panel before the judges make their final decisions. The winners will be announced at the glittering ceremony on Friday 13th May at the The Rum Warehouse, Titanic Hotel in Liverpool, with host, food writer, and presenter Nigel Barden.

Co-Founder and Director, Sue Howorth said: "We were inundated with some incredible entries and we have been burning the midnight oil to get through them as they came in right up to the wire. The judges had extremely difficult decisions to make, so the finalists should be extremely proud of themselves!"

With a bright future ahead of them, the Blue Whale Media team are looking forward to more award nominations and the The North West Family Business Awards Ceremony.



Chester Business School 

## LEADERSHIP SELF-REVIEW

27th April, 10am-4pm, Time Square, Warrington

JOIN OUR LEADERSHIP SELF-REVIEW COURSE, APRIL 27TH 10-4PM

On this 1 day course (with online follow up) you will:

- develop effective leadership and communication skills to get the best performance from your teams
- reflect on your own leadership and communication styles
- explore personality profiling
- find out how to connect effectively across your organisation

Delivered at Time Square in the centre of Warrington

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Sign up now: <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/advanced-manager-courses>

## ADVANCED MANAGER COURSES 2022

GET SET FOR THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

# Company gives support to charity after prospering during lockdown

A WARRINGTON-based company which found it prospered during lockdown is taking action to help a charity which is facing challenges because of the pandemic.

Ultra Decking, at Woolston, is supporting WellChild – a charity that provides garden transformations to help children with complex health needs.

They are working with the charity's Helping Hands project to provide accessible space that provides a better quality of life with long-lasting durable composite decking – covering the materials and shipping costs for each project. Ultra Decking is a fast-growing composite decking brand.

Sales manager Luke Jeffrey said: "We came across the project through a personal connection with a family friend who was struggling. We wanted to give back to the wider community. We believe everyone has a duty to try and help out wherever they can and give back to those who have not been so fortunate as us."

In one transformation, Ultra Decking's composite materials were able to help make a small garden safer and more accessible. As a result, a six-year-old girl and her family have a space to spend

time together and for her to play safely and have her own swing.

Charities like WellChild have struggled during the pandemic with huge rises in cost for materials and, now, fuel.

The landscaping and composite sector, by contrast, have kept going with more people looking at home renovation during lockdown.

Mr Jeffrey said: "The pandemic has opened our eyes a bit more to how much the little things truly do matter.

"We urge more businesses within our sector to support in any way they can. Even a small amount can make a huge difference. In these challenging times we must ensure this projects go ahead and offer families a small sense of normality.

Ultra Decking is hoping to encourage others in trades such as landscaping or building to join with them is offering support to the scheme.

Learn more about projects run by WellChild or access their support at [www.wellchild.co.uk](http://www.wellchild.co.uk)



## Electrifying isn't terrifying

A roadmap to transition your business fleet to EV

Hear from industry experts to find out how you can make the switch to electric vehicles for your business fleet.

Join us to:

- Learn about the current status of electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the UK
- Hear about the benefits of switching to EVs - ranging from personal taxation, corporate capital allowance, operation and maintenance cost reduction, ESG
- Get practical advice and guidance to develop plans to make the switch
- Discuss challenges and opportunities with the experts
- Help develop your company strategy to take advantage of electrifying your fleet now in advance of the phase out of petrol and diesel vehicles

[Book your free place now!](#)

**Tuesday 19 April, 10am-11am or 12.30pm-1.30pm**  
Spark/Plug Rooms, The Engine Rooms, Birchwood Park, Warrington, WA3 6AE

Event run by GRIDSERVE in partnership with Warrington Borough Council as part of project REWIRE-NW



## Summer sunshine - get there from Liverpool with Lufthansa

THE rush to book for summer has started at Liverpool John Lennon Airport!

Thanks to their new route with Lufthansa, which starts in May 2022, you'll be able to access even more of Europe's incredible destinations.

One of the hottest destinations for 2022 is Portuguese capital Lisbon. Home to incredible architecture, amazing food and top-tier nightlife, it is also one of the continent's best value-for-money city breaks.

You can fly there this summer, from Liverpool, with Lufthansa.

Other destinations include Antalya, Turkey and Santorini, Greece.

Bookings can be made via [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com)

# Olivia crowned apprentice of the year

**A trainee recruitment adviser who is playing a key part in helping Kinaxia Logistics to fill dozens of HGV driver vacancies has been crowned the group's apprentice of the year.**

Rising star Olivia O'Neill, aged 20, from Warrington, joined Kinaxia last May on an 18-month apprenticeship programme.

Her line manager Simone Williams, Kinaxia's group recruitment manager, said Olivia has proved to be an 'outstanding' addition to the team.

In the past six months, Kinaxia has taken on nearly 100 additional drivers and Olivia has managed a large part of the recruitment process, from writing job advertisements to sifting through applications and working with HR managers across the group's sites to arrange interviews.

She has also come up with a several suggestions to enhance the group's recruitment process, including a new system for tracking applications.

Olivia is one of 13 apprentices currently employed by Kinaxia. The group has vacancies for seven more apprentices in areas including customer care, supply chain and warehousing operations, business administration and vehicle servicing and maintenance.

Simone said: "Olivia is a huge asset to our recruitment team and is making outstanding progress.

"Sometimes I have to remind myself she is an apprentice, as she has adjusted to the job so quickly and constantly goes out of her way to meet deadlines.

"She is a bright, enthusiastic individual whose time management skills are impeccable, and she often stays on to make sure work is completed. Nothing is ever too much. She is always keen to learn more and is never afraid to try new tasks.

"She completes all her coursework and studies on time, and the feedback from her tutor is always great."

Olivia said she was delighted but surprised to win the award.

"I didn't know anything about the logistics industry before I joined Kinaxia and it was all a bit daunting at first, but the job has given me a massive confidence boost and I'm really proud and honoured to be named as the apprentice of the year," she said.

"I feel that I have worked really hard and it's nice to be recognised in this way."

Kinaxia chief executive Simon Hobbs presented Olivia with her trophy, a framed certificate and an Amazon voucher.

He said: "Over the past three years, we have recruited 30 apprentices across the group.

"We work with key providers to ensure they gain hands-on experience supported by a designated mentor and an internal

training programme, leading to the appropriate, recognised qualifications.

"Many of our apprentices have gone on to secure permanent positions and earn promotion. We are committed to giving young, enthusiastic individuals the opportunity to build careers in the transport industry and it's

fundamental to our philosophy of developing our own talent for the future.

"We love to celebrate their success with us, and Olivia is a worthy winner of the 2022 apprentice of the year award."

Kinaxia employs more than 1,600 staff across its businesses and has a fleet of more than 800

vehicles which transport goods for supermarkets and other retailers as well as the leisure, food and drink and manufacturing sectors.

Headquartered in Macclesfield, Cheshire, Kinaxia offers contract packing, e-fulfilment, returns management and storage services from its nationwide warehouse facilities.



■ L-R Simone Williams, Simon Hobbs, Olivia O'Neill and Mark Stevenson.

# Former army Field Medic appointed as first Warrington Together Place Director

**FORMER** army Field Medic Carl Marsh has been appointed as the first Place Director of Warrington Together following a thorough recruitment process.

Working closely with local partners, Carl will play a central role in the future integration of health and care, taking a lead on tackling the health inequalities within our communities.

Carl has over 40 years of experience within healthcare and is currently Chief Commissioner at NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

After completing 24 years' service as a Field Medic in the Army Medical Services, Carl joined the NHS in 2004. He worked at the heart of delivering the NHS Five Year Forward View with NHS Right Care and as Programme Director for the Pan-Cheshire Integrated Care Pioneer programme before joining the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as Head of Inspection for Integrated Care.

In his new role, Carl will oversee Warrington Together's key objectives. These are:

Improving quality of life for all citizens

Narrowing the gap between differences in life expectancy quality of life across Warrington communities

Reducing A&E attendances/admissions and emergency ambulance callouts

More residents self-managing their health and care, and those with long term conditions having access to their own care record and shared care plan

Involving the borough's health and social care workforce in developing and delivering more effective services

Greater use of digital technologies to create better, smoother support pathways and more control over individual wellbeing

Warrington Borough Council Chief Executive, Professor Steven Broomhead MBE, said: "Following a rigorous recruitment process, we are very pleased to have appointed Carl as Place Director for Warrington. I look forward to us working together to tackle the big local health issues on the agenda.

"He brings with him a wealth of experience and knowledge, and his leadership and partnership-oriented approach will bring added benefit and support to achieving our health goals across the borough."

Dr Andrew Davies, Chief Clinical Officer at NHS Warrington CCG said: "I would like to congratulate Carl on his appointment as Place Director for Warrington.

"I'm entirely confident that Carl's experience and dedication make him the right person to lead Warrington Together in working with partners to continue our journey of improving health and

reducing inequalities."

With much of the work to improve Warrington's health and social care already underway, Carl says he is looking to build on what has been put in place already.

Speaking of his appointment, Carl Marsh said: "I am delighted to have been appointed Place Director for Warrington and I welcome the opportunity to build on what we have already achieved and continuing to work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of local people.

"I am committed to ensuring that our teams are well supported through the transition, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together as we move forward for the benefit of the people of Warrington."

Carl is one of nine place directors who have been appointed across Cheshire and Merseyside and who will take up their posts on 1 July 2022, when NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) is established. In the meantime, Carl will become involved with the ICB from early April so he can contribute to the further design of the integration agenda.

This was a robust, inclusive process and the selection panel for each post included the ICB Designate Chief Executive, a non-executive director, a place-specific elected member or members, the relevant local authority Chief Executive, and representatives



of both primary care and NHS providers.

Graham Urwin, Designate Chief Executive of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, said: "I am really excited we have put together an excellent team of people to carry out the pivotal role of place director throughout our Integrated Care System. They all have relevant experience and skills, and comprise a complementary team who will work together and alongside NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB and the wider Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

"As well as delivering on effective integration, they will also address the very real health inequalities our communities experience – a primary objective of the ICB and all our partners.

"I would like to personally congratulate all the successful candidates and wish them every success."

## Debra wins 'Negotiator of the Year' Award

DEBRA Carter is celebrating after being awarded Negotiator of the Year by Gascoigne Halman.

Debra has worked at the Lymm branch of the estate agent for eight years.

The Negotiator of the Year award is given to a Gascoigne Halman employee who continually goes above and beyond in their daily duties and provides the highest level of customer care. Only two of these awards are handed out each year across the estate agent's network of 23 offices.

Bobby Shahlavi, Manager of the Lymm branch commented: "We are delighted that Debra has been named Negotiator of the Year! After an amazing eight years with us we couldn't be happier with her achievement"

Bobby continued: "Debra is certainly a worthy recipient having worked diligently over the last year, delighting many clients along the way. She's a great example of what we are all about at Gascoigne Halman."

Peter Higham, Managing Director at Gascoigne Halman: "I'd like to extend my congratulations

to Debra on winning this award. Putting systems in place for our staff to show their excellence and skill is a huge part of the culture at Gascoigne Halman. We strive to

recognise our staff's achievements and really value their hard work, especially over the last few years."

For more information on buying

or letting in the local area, please contact Gascoigne Halman Lymm on 01925 758 345 or [lymm@gascoignehalman.co.uk](mailto:lymm@gascoignehalman.co.uk)



■ Bobby Shahlavi, Debra Carter, Peter Higham.

# Healthcare specialist unveils plan to improve lives

**PREVENTATIVE** healthcare specialist **PAM Group** has unveiled a social value plan outlining a range of measures designed to improve the lives of its staff, clients and the communities where it operates.

The Warrington-headquartered group's new blueprint, called *Do The Right Thing*, sets out its commitment to helping its 650-strong workforce, clients, stakeholders and communities to live better, healthier and happier lives.

The strategy includes:

- Giving staff 1.5 days' paid leave each year to volunteer with local organisations;
- A new annual charity fund of at least £12,000 giving employees the opportunity to nominate their chosen good causes for grants;
- A pledge to support 10 apprenticeships and 20 work placements each year. Recruitment by the group will also focus on those who are furthest from the workforce, including through job centres and employment support groups;
- Promoting the Real Living Wage among its supply chain and customers. PAM Group has already adopted the Real Living Wage for its own staff;
- Improving skills through the PAM Learning Academy, which will be a centre of excellence for staff with in-house and external training;
- A wellbeing programme for staff, including remote working where appropriate and health and wellness events and workshops.

The plan also outlines PAM Group's sustainability policy, which is called *Our World*. It includes a commitment to keeping travel to a minimum, encourages the

use of public transport, walking, cycling and car sharing, promises to procure goods locally and to use energy efficiently across PAM's sites, incorporating low carbon technology and renewable energy systems.

Louise Abbs, the managing director of PAM Wellbeing, is spearheading the initiative as the group's new social value director.

She said: "Every business has a responsibility to look after its people, clients and the communities in which it works.

"Social value is about doing the right thing, and that's why our business is committed to improving the lives of our clients, colleagues, stakeholders and local communities.

"Do The Right Thing outlines the contribution PAM Group already makes to the economic, social and environmental aspects of life, how we can benefit the communities we work in, and the impacts our actions have on them.

"We aim to ensure our decisions and actions add social value by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general.

"Doing the right thing supports the development of positive employee relationships, creates a supportive culture, builds trust in the organisation, helps to attract and retain talent, and helps colleagues to develop a strong identity with the company they work for.

"The pandemic has, over the last two years, made us more conscious about our own individual responsibilities and about ourselves, so our Social Value Plan could not have come at a better time."

Louise will lead a 12-strong social value board made up of staff from across the group to devise and implement, measure and report on the commitments outlined in the document.

She said: "We have already begun

making great strides, with our commitment to the Real Living Wage and a number of colleagues wishing to volunteer.

"We look forward to building on this positive start in this extremely important area."

PAM Group is one of the largest occupational health, employee assistance programme and wellbeing providers in the UK. It offers a range of integrated services to public and private sector clients, supporting more than 600,000 employees at over 1,000 businesses and organisations.

Its services include absence management, physiotherapy, employee assistance programmes, psychological support, corporate health assessments and neurodiversity assessments, drug and alcohol screening. It also has a retail arm which supplies fitness, exercise and rehabilitation equipment to sports clubs and sports and physiotherapy professionals.



■ Louise Abbs.

## Food Bank receives £4,000 donation from chemical company

INGEVITY UK Warrington has donated £4,000 to the Warrington Foodbank through its IngeviCares philanthropy program.

The presentation was made by Ingevity's HR Assistant, Louise Clifton, to David McDonald, Foodbank chief executive.

Louise Clifton said "It is really pleasing to be able to support Warrington Food Bank

"They do a lot of great work in supporting our local community through the many support services they offer. It was great to meet David and his team to see first-hand the level of support they offer and the challenges they face."

Ingevity is a global specialty

chemical company with a site in Lower Walton, Warrington that employs 155 people.

Through the IngeviCares philanthropy program, the company donates a portion of revenue and volunteer time to local communities, providing budgets to all manufacturing locations to be used for plant-level funding tailored to each community.

David McDonald said: "We are really pleased to have been contacted by Ingevity UK and are very grateful for the kind donation of £4000. Their support allows us to fulfil our mission and continue to serve our community."





# Openreach creates 540 new jobs after a record year for hiring female engineers

**OPENREACH has announced it will create and fill around 540 more jobs in the North West including Warrington during 2022.**

This includes more than 400 apprenticeships – as it continues to invest billions of pounds into its UK broadband network, people and training.

The new recruits will be based across every county in the region, working to build and connect customers to the company's ultrafast, ultra-reliable Full Fibre broadband network. The mammoth build is on track to reach 25 million UK homes and businesses by December 2026 including hundreds of thousands in the North West. The hiring spree – 4,000 new jobs are being created across the UK – is part of the largest recruitment drive in Openreach's history and will also help deliver further improvements in customer satisfaction, which is at a record high.

Openreach already employs the UK's largest team of telecoms engineers and professionals, and has committed to building a more diverse and inclusive team in an industry that's traditionally been very white, male dominated. Last year, the company attracted 600 women into trainee engineering roles – more than double the previous year. The boost was thanks partly to employing language experts to transform its job adverts and descriptions, making them gender neutral.

Kerry Biggar is 54 and from Audenshaw in Manchester. She said: "Before joining Openreach last year I worked in hospitality in

Manchester City Centre. However, when Covid hit, the industry collapsed and I was furloughed and eventually made redundant. I knew people who worked in Openreach and they kept telling me to go for it so I applied not really knowing what to expect.

"It's been a brilliant move for me and it's great at my age to start work in a completely new industry and know there are still opportunities ahead. I joined as a cabler but am already working on a managed service project and learning completely new skills.

"I would absolutely recommend Openreach to other women. It's a completely different environment to the one I was used to and certainly a lot more physical but it's great. I think a lot of women would be surprised how much they would enjoy it."

Nicola Lawson is 39 and from Warrington. She joined Openreach having previously worked for a communication provider. She said: "I had a number of friends and family who worked at Openreach and they all loved it so when the opportunity came up to apply for a job I did it and have never looked back. I've thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills and love the fact every day is different and I'm accountable and responsible for my own work. I'd encourage any woman thinking about a change in career to just go for it!"

Clive Selley, CEO, Openreach, said: "Openreach is a people business first and foremost, so I'm proud that we're continuing to invest heavily in our people, having hired and trained more than 8,000 new engineers over

the last two years. We're rightly recognised as one of the best big companies to work for in the UK, and we're determined to stay that way, so we've been building state of the art training schools all over the country where we can teach people the skills and techniques they need for long, exciting and rewarding careers in engineering.

"We want to reflect the communities we serve and give opportunities to people from all backgrounds, so I'm encouraged that we've recruited more women and minority groups this year compared to last year, but we've got much more to do in an industry that hasn't been very diverse historically.

"These new recruits will play a crucial role as we continue to improve services for our customers and build the biggest and best broadband network in the UK, covering millions of rural and urban homes."

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said; "I firmly believe in the importance of supporting women in STEM and am delighted to see Openreach doubling the number of women in trainee engineering roles last year.

"Investing in creating thousands of new jobs and apprenticeships will also boost our mission to level-up communities, support economic growth and give more people across the country the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their potential."

The new roles offer a very competitive starting salary and long-term career prospects, but

candidates don't need any formal qualifications to apply. All you need is a driving license, a strong work ethic, great customer service skills and an enthusiasm to work outdoors – Openreach will give you all the equipment and training you need to do the rest. Click here for a full list of employee benefits.

Alongside its recruitment drive, Openreach has committed to represent ONS measured levels of ethnic diversity<sup>3</sup> across the UK and is aiming for at least 20 percent of its trainee engineer recruits to be women this year, with 50 percent of its external hires into management also to be women by 2025.

Openreach also plans to retrain more than 3,000 of its existing engineers during the next year – changing their focus from fixing older, copper-based technologies to installing and maintaining faster, more reliable fibre connections.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Nadine Dorries, recently opened the company's newest training centre in Thornaby which is the latest of 11 regional training schools – including one in Bolton – it has built and upgraded across the country. Around 25,000 engineers pass through these centres every year across the UK, receiving a combined 180,000 days in training.

More than 3,950 Openreach people already live and work in the North West. Openreach's full fibre broadband rollout has already reached more than 830,000 local homes and businesses. In January, a further 196,000 were added to the build programme.

# Local laboratory leads the way on prenatal paternity testing

**WARRINGTON-based DNA testing provider AlphaBiolabs is celebrating after becoming the first UK laboratory to be awarded accreditation for its non-invasive prenatal paternity testing.**

The laboratory, which provides a range of DNA, drug, alcohol, and Covid-19 testing services for members of the public, the legal sector, and the workplace sector, was awarded ISO 17025 accreditation by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) following a two-year validation process.

Beginning in 2019, the AlphaBiolabs DNA team undertook an extensive validation project, ensuring that the company's prenatal paternity testing methods met the highest possible standards for efficacy, as required by UKAS.

The project was then submitted to UKAS, and an external audit was conducted to ensure the company's DNA analysis met the criteria for ISO 17025 accreditation, an internationally recognised standard for testing and calibration laboratories.

As well as supplying prenatal paternity testing for members of the public and legal clients across the UK, AlphaBiolabs also exports its prenatal paternity tests to 23 countries around the world.

News of the accreditation comes as figures show demand for prenatal paternity tests is on the rise.

As last year, the company recorded a 47 per cent increase in such tests performed versus pre-pandemic levels\* as more people become aware of the benefits of this innovative, risk-free test.

A non-invasive prenatal paternity test can be carried out from as early as seven weeks into pregnancy, making it possible to determine paternity before a baby is born.

An AlphaBiolabs prenatal paternity test is 100 per cent safe for both mother and baby, as it only requires cheek swabs and a blood sample from the mother and cheek swabs from the father. It is possible to identify the unborn

baby's DNA via the mother's blood sample, as DNA from the foetus is passed into the mother's bloodstream via the placenta during pregnancy.

If the man in question is the biological father of the child, the man and baby will share DNA markers.

Casey Randall, head of DNA at AlphaBiolabs, said: "We are really proud to be the first testing laboratory in the UK to secure this accreditation and the achievement is testament to the hard work and dedication of our DNA team."

"For many people, establishing paternity before a baby is born

can have a significant impact, not just on family dynamics, but also during any legal proceedings where arrangements need to be made to safeguard a child that may be at risk, or where families need to prove paternity to resolve maintenance payment or child custody issues.

"We pride ourselves on being a market leader in innovation, investing in the people, tools and techniques that put us at the forefront of DNA analysis. With UKAS accreditation, customers can be confident that AlphaBiolabs' prenatal paternity testing is performed to the highest possible standard for fast, accurate results that they can trust."



■ Casey Randall Head of DNA at AlphaBiolabs.

## Gulliver's thank customers for helping raise £15,000 for Ukraine support

GULLIVER'S Theme Park Resorts based in Warrington is thanking customers for their generosity after they helped raise more than £15,000 to support the people of Ukraine.

The family firm pledged that £3 from every ticket bought over a weekend at its three open resorts – Gulliver's Valley theme park in Rotherham, Gulliver's Land in Milton Keynes and Gulliver's World in Warrington – would be given to the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC).

In total the initiative raised more than £15,000 which will now be donated straight to the DEC's Ukraine Appeal.

Julie Dalton, managing director of Gulliver's Theme Park Resorts, said: "As a company, we like to do what we can to help the communities we serve but sometimes there is a need to offer support when things are happening further afield. The awful scenes in Ukraine have affected us all and we knew we wanted to financially help the official appeal."

"And our customers did not disappoint! Together we have

raised over £15,000 which is an incredible amount and will go to the Disaster Emergency Committee's Ukraine fund which is used to provide support, medical aid, food

and shelter to people affected by the crisis.

"We'd just like to say a massive thank you to our customers for their support."

Anyone who wants to donate to the DEC appeal individually can do so by visiting: [www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal](http://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal).



# Minister praises Warrington as gold standard for providing disability care

**THE Minister responsible for Disabled People, Health & Work, Chloe Smith, praised Warrington as a gold standard for disability care during a visit to the town to speak to disability champions and partners.**

The Department for Work & Pensions Minister, who was joined by Warrington South MP Andy Carter, spent the day at the Warrington Disability Partnership, meeting with their Chief Executive Dave Thompson and a number of local community groups and organisations from across Cheshire.

She also took time out to trial a disability scooter on a special track developed by Warrington Disability Partnership, to provide training for first-time users or for people buying scooters from their linked disability business, Warrington Disability Trading Company.

Her visit came as the Government announced a £2.5 million package to support disabled people travelling more confidently on the transport network as it reopens after coronavirus.

During her visit the Minister also met with players of the Warrington Wolves Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) team at Victoria Park. PDRL is a modified version of the game for anyone that has a Physical Disability and/or acquired brain injury that would usually stop them from playing Rugby League.

Warrington South MP Andy

Carter said: "We've had an absolutely packed agenda here in Warrington today with Disability Minister Chloe Smith. Meeting with different partners from across Cheshire, it underlines just how much work is happening in the disability sector here and the Warrington Disability Partnership, in particular, should be very proud of its achievements.

"Raising awareness of disabilities and promoting well-being through sport is also something that I believe in. We want to be able to attract support from all sections of society, so it was great to take the Minister over to Victoria Park to show her the great work that the Warrington Wolves Foundation are doing and to meet some of the players.

"We all have a role to play in changing the mindset around disability, and employers and organisations in Warrington are stepping up to the challenge by creating more inclusive workplaces and communities."

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Chloe Smith MP said: "It was fantastic to visit Warrington and see the wonderful work of the Warrington Disability Partnership in helping disabled people live independent lives.

"It was also a real pleasure to meet with some of the Warrington Wolves Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) team and see first-hand the value and transformative power of sport in the local community."



# Green Apprenticeships will help company meet carbon neutral pledge

**THE theme of this year's National Apprenticeship Week was 'build the future' and Warrington based water company United Utilities is creating 30 Green Apprenticeships, to help achieve its plans to go carbon neutral by the end of this decade.**

The first water company to be given the gold standard stamp of approval for science-based carbon targets wants more apprentices to join its award winning scheme and this year is taking on a record number, with almost 80 opportunities, with many roles playing a key role in helping to make the North West greener, by focusing on reducing carbon emissions or making environmental improvements.

Julie McGovern, Head of People at United Utilities said: "It's a unique and exciting time to be joining us. We have pledged to reduce emissions and reach Net Zero by 2030 and we need to ensure we make existing apprenticeships greener and identify new apprenticeships in emerging green occupations.

"Creating jobs and skills to support our journey is vital and our award-winning apprenticeship programme will play a key role in helping us meet our aspirations."

United Utilities, who provide water and wastewater services to 7 million customers across the North West, pledged to reach "Net Zero" by 2030.

This includes planting one million trees, switching the company's

entire fleet of vehicles to run on electricity or alternative fuel and restoring 1,000 hectares of internationally important peat bog, which is perfect for capturing carbon.

The company has already met the first milestone in its ambitious plan and is delivering all water and wastewater services using only green electricity.

With Green Apprenticeship roles ranging from scientists, fleet

technicians and engineers, they will help keep up the momentum as the company focuses on new innovations in its operations, fleet, land and supply chain to improve the environment.

"The opportunities at United Utilities are endless. Our apprenticeships are open to all, whether you're fresh out of school or college, starting your work journey later in life or wanting to switch jobs paths.

"We're also recognised for our approach to gender equality and diversity in the workplace. There really are no limits and as green issue become more and more important across apprenticeships and the wider world of work, I look forward to seeing our new recruits contributing to a greener future", added Julie.

To apply for an apprenticeship, visit [www.unitedutilities.com/apprenticeships](http://www.unitedutilities.com/apprenticeships)



## Housebuilder moves to Warrington as Northern region gears for growth

A housebuilder has chosen Warrington for its new regional headquarters as it gears for growth.

Mayor of Warrington, Councillor Maureen Creaghan cut the ribbon to officially open the new regional headquarters for Tilia Homes Northern, which has chosen Concentric Offices in Birchwood Park as its new home.

The move marks a significant milestone for the housebuilder, which was sold by construction firm Kier Group to investment company Terra Firma in June last year. The new office space is now home to over 90 employees, and Tilia has ambitious plans to significantly grow the regional business over the next three years.

Reflecting its desire for growth, Tilia Homes has also recently made a number of senior appointments in John Mooney as Construction Director, Stuart Craig as Sales and Marketing Director and Head of Customer Service Emily Ratcliffe.

Rick Long, Regional Managing

Director (North East) at Tilia Homes, said: "We are delighted to have moved into our new office in Warrington, which provides a brand-new home for Tilia Northern. We have relocated our headquarters from Leeds to Warrington in order to focus our efforts on growing the business in the North West. We are still maintaining an office in Leeds as a hub for our North East operations.

"We're really grateful to Mayor Maureen Creaghan for joining us to officially open our new office and having the opportunity to present to her our growth plans for the region."

Tilia Homes is actively seeking new land opportunities for sites of between 75 and 330 units across the M6 and M62 corridors, specifically targeting areas around Preston, Clitheroe, Liverpool and Manchester. Further land opportunities are also being sought in the Yorkshire Area.

For more information, visit [www.tiliahomes.co.uk](http://www.tiliahomes.co.uk)



■ **Ribbon Cutting. L-R Mr John Nunnerley (Mayor Consort), Cllr Maureen Creaghan, Mayor of Warrington, Rick Long, Regional MD North East.**

# Tutor creates 3D flag emblems to show support and raise funds for Ukraine

**ELECTRICAL tutor Steve Haney has created over 170 flag emblems to raise money for the refugees affected by the conflict in Ukraine.**

In his own time, Steve, a tutor at Warrington & Vale Royal College, spent a weekend drawing the emblems via Computer-Aided Design (CAD) before printing them using a 3D Printer- the industry-standard Original Prusa i3 MK3.

Each batch took Steve around 12 hours to make, with him changing

the colour from yellow to blue halfway through the process.

The emblems, which are easily clipped onto a lanyard, are being sold in the college for £2 each, with all proceeds going to charities helping the people of Ukraine during these uncertain and turbulent times.

As well as creating the emblems for college staff and students, Steve made a further 50 for a contact who works locally within the NHS. The college's 3D printing facilities mean Steve can continue

producing more emblems in college as well as at home.

Steve is also planning to upload his design to Thingify, a site that allows people all around the world to access and print designs via 3D

printers.

The college is incredibly proud of Steve for this fantastic project and is delighted to see so many of its staff and students wearing the emblems around the campus.





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\*Offer available for any booking made by 15th April to take place between Monday 4th April – Friday 22nd April. New bookings only. Subject to availability.



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# Foundation join stars to make Best Day Possible for care users

**SOCIAL care services in Warrington enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime celebration with Strictly Come Dancing and US theatre stars, and some of the UK's most loved sporting organisations.**

The national social care charity Community Integrated Care, which is one of the leading social care providers locally, hosted The Best Day Possible, a world-first digital festival for people who access and provide social care services. Delivered on their www.What-To-Do.co.uk platform, an award recognised website that offers free accessible activities every day, the festival saw people who access care and support locally enjoy a packed day with VIP experiences.

Held to celebrate the charity's 34th birthday, Community Integrated Care's festival included a dance masterclass with Strictly legend Vincent Simone, activity sessions with Manchester City in the Community and Warrington Wolves Foundation, a virtual styling session with make-up artist to the stars, Clare Pinkey, and even an exclusive performance from New York City by award-winning US theatre star, Morgan Kirner.

John Hughes, Director of Partnerships at Community Integrated Care, says:

"Community Integrated Care is a leading social care charity across the region, so we were delighted to welcome so many local people – and hundreds of others from across the UK – to enjoy what was a phenomenal event. From mocktails to make-up, Strictly to Broadway, this festival offered something for everyone and was a celebration fitting of an incredible charity.

We hope that this festival helps highlight the exciting free opportunities that people can benefit from on www.What-To-Do.co.uk. This free website gives people who access care and support a host of incredible free accessible live experiences every day, led by leading experts. This platform has helped to change many lives, tackling isolation and giving people exciting new experiences. What To Do is a vibrant, fun and friendly community, and we hope to have inspired many more people to join in the fun."

Andrew Brady of the Warrington Wolves Foundation said: "Community Integrated Care are a key partner of our charity, so we were thrilled to play a lead role in the Best Day Possible festival and celebrate their anniversary. It was an unforgettable experience to



see so many people, not only in Warrington but also across the UK, getting active and having fun with our team. The www.What-To-Do.co.uk website is a brilliant platform and we are excited to support more sessions in the future."

Oliver Thomason, (pictured) who is an active member of the www.What-To-Do.co.uk community, says: "The Best Day Possible festival was brilliant. It was very special that stars took so much time to do so many great sessions.

"What To Do has given me the

chance to enjoy and learn so many new things. It has been amazing to try exciting activities for the first time, like Yoga. It's really helped me in my home life too, because I've learned great things like how to make my own delicious meals. I'd love to see many more people benefit from this exciting website."

Since its launch in 2021, it has supported many profound outcomes for people who access the site – including enabling people to cook independently and form new friendships.

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