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CHAMBER BUSINESS

News and views from the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry | **Q2 2025**



**HRH The Princess Royal
welcomed to Mornflake**

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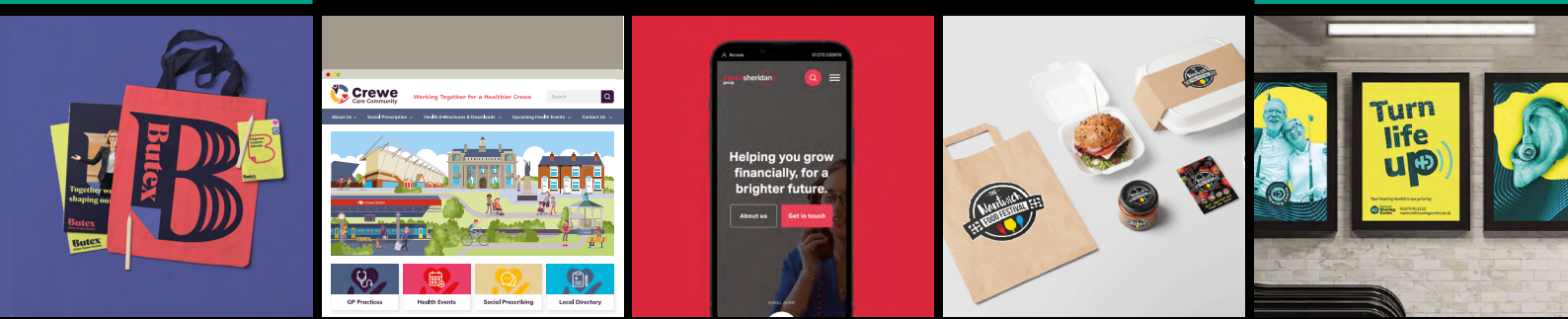
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29.08.25 | 09:00 – 11:00



MEET & EAT
23.09.25 | 12:00 – 14:00



**NETWALKING
AT OVERWATER MARINA**
29.09.25 | 09:00 – 11:00

The next issue of South Cheshire Chamber Business Magazine is due out on October 10th 2025.

Deadline for copy is September 22nd 2025.

For advertising Sales and Articles, please contact
Jon Barnes: 01270 445409 or jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk

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ESSENTIALS: ONLINE MEMBERSHIP £18/ MONTH (INC. VAT)

Our Essentials package is an online membership option for organisations that want to be a part of the South Cheshire Chamber community but don't want to attend events or access most of the benefits included in our other packages.

All prices inclusive of VAT, minimum sign up term 12 months and information subject to change.

Check www.sccci.co.uk for updates.



WELCOME

to the Chamber's magazine 'South Cheshire Business'

As we move through the second half of the year, I continue to be inspired by the resilience and collaboration that define our local business community.

One of the highlights of this quarter has been the growing visibility and momentum of the One Crewe initiative. This place-based partnership is beginning to shift perceptions, instil pride, and bring together key stakeholders from across the private, public, and voluntary sectors. It is encouraging to see so many businesses and organisations actively contributing to this collective vision for Crewe.

Equally encouraging is the Chamber's deepening commitment to supporting skills and talent development across the region. The spotlight in this issue falls on Cheshire College South & West, whose apprenticeship programme with Bentley Motors exemplifies how education and enterprise can work hand in hand to nurture future talent (p.8). The college's efforts to equip young people with skills for tomorrow's economy deserve our recognition and our continued support.

Preparations are well underway for this year's South Cheshire Chamber Business Awards, a highlight of the local business calendar and a celebration of the innovation, resilience and community spirit that define our region. The awards offer a platform to shine a spotlight on businesses of all sizes and sectors, recognising excellence in leadership, growth, sustainability, and social value. Whether you're an established firm or a rising star, we encourage all members to get involved, submit a nomination, or simply join us on the night to celebrate the strength

and diversity of South Cheshire's business community.

The Chamber's Next Gen Network continues to gather momentum, offering a dedicated space for young professionals and emerging leaders to connect, learn and grow. Through a mix of informal networking, skills workshops and peer support, the network is helping to equip the next generation with the confidence and connections they need to thrive. As businesses plan for the future, investing in talent has never been more important—and Next Gen is playing a key role in building a vibrant pipeline of future leaders across South Cheshire.

This edition also highlights the inspiring work of our members in the charity sector, such as 2wish, Her-Place Charitable Trust, and Cheshire Connect, whose community impact cannot be overstated. The way our business community rallies behind these causes is something we can all be proud of.

The Chamber itself continues to evolve. As we welcome new members and patrons into our network, our role as a connector, advocate, and support hub has never been more important. Whether you are seeking new contacts, policy influence, or practical guidance, the Chamber is here to help.

Please visit our website at www.sccci.co.uk to explore the full range of services and support on offer. If your business has news to share or would like to feature in the magazine, contact Jon at the Chamber.

Wishing you and your business continued success in the months ahead.

Paul Colman **Chief Executive** @SCCCI_CEO

MEET THE CHAMBER TEAM

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SOUTH CHESHIRE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER PATRONS



WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

A chamber of commerce is a collection of local businesses who have come together to further their own interests and those of their community.



PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

You gain access to a wealth of promotional opportunities. List your business on our online members directory. Share your successes with our social media audience. Why not showcase your expertise with an article in our magazine or newsletter? If you're hosting an event, promote it on our online members area or even sponsor one of our Chamber events.



NETWORKING IN CHESHIRE

We host a variety of events – both online and offline – throughout the year. Ranging from Final Fridays for an informal networking breakfast to our Annual Awards dinner where we celebrate the hard work and achievements of our community.



BUSINESS SUPPORT

No matter the size or age of your business, everyone needs support at times. Chamber membership offers you support which, for smaller businesses, may not be available in house. You can access 24/7 advice lines covering HR, Legal, Health & Safety and Tax. As well as an online library of 700 documents and templates such as employee handbooks and interview forms.




INTERNATIONAL TRADE

If you're looking to trade internationally, we help local businesses go global. Our experts can guide you through the documentation and latest regulations. Members can receive up to 50% off export documents!

Meet the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry

NEW MEMBERS

 2wish liane.dooley@2wish.org.uk 2wish.org.uk 01270 504700	 Eyebright Ltd enquiries@eyebrightutilities.co.uk eyebrightutilities.co.uk 01412 128909	 Nomad Bars Limited contact@lordcombermere.co.uk lordcombermere.co.uk 01270 483098
 Alpha Omega Frame Repairs Ltd info@aofr.co.uk alphaomega-glasses-repair.co.uk 01270 509242	 F W Power Generators Limited john@fwpower.co.uk fwpower.co.uk 01829 863497	 Owness Solutions garywhitehall@owness-solutions.net owness-solutions.net 07989 148 939
 Axiomata Limited neil@axiomata.uk axiomata.uk 07964 903 231	 Fortis Business Support Consultancy zee@fortisbusinesssupport.co.uk 07710 689 321	 Rosie's Beauty rosiesbeautynantwich@gmail.com rosies-beauty.com 01270 747447
 B-Hive AI scott@b-hive.ai b-hive.ai 07951 017 303	 Future in Finance hello@futureinfinance.co.uk futureinfinance.co.uk 07825 149 137	 Simian srobinson@simian-risk.com 0345 602 2418
 Business Mastermind Group info@businessmastermindgroup.co.uk businessmastermindgroup.co.uk 07939 860 470	 Handelsbanken handelsbanken.co.uk/en 01782 210580	 The Cat Show Live Ltd event@thecatshowlive.com thecatshowlive.co.uk 07885 173 555
 Cercio C2C Academy Community Interest Company Ltd info@cercioacademy.org cercioacademy.org 07792 193 957	 Kevin Lownds Funeral Services Limited lownds@kevinlowndsfuneralservices.com kevinlowndsfuneralservices.com 01782 291500	 The Petty Pool Trust admin.pettypool@btconnect.com pettypool.org.uk 01606 889 097
 CP Media cfparrsons@btconnect.com 07712 725 756	 Sharon Ames Consulting sharon@sharonamesu.co.uk sharonamesu.co.uk 078812 98532	
 D&G Office Supplies Ltd sales@dandgofficesupplies.com dandgofficesupplies.com 01270 583343	 Morgan's Sparkling Minds morgans.sparklingminds@gmail.com 07811 664 736	

MEMBER FEEDBACK



Ian Carroll
MBSIT

We were required to make use of the Chamber HR services again a few months ago.

We had quite a complex situation and wanted to ensure we were acting both fairly and in line with legislation.

The advisor who has supported us over the past few years was available again this year, and we were delighted to have his guidance. He explains things very clearly and within

minutes of speaking with him, we always feel reassured. He is very personable and uses humour to help alleviate any stress. He provided us with advice and the necessary tools to bring our recent situation to a satisfactory conclusion.

The advisor referred us to colleagues in the legal section of the Chamber resources, who assisted us in drawing up an agreement that was required. The referral was made within the hour, and we were able to speak with the legal representatives the same day. The agreement was then produced the following day. It was a seamless transition.

We are so grateful to have access to the Chamber resources. The document library is easy to access and navigate, and the letter templates make communicating with staff regarding HR issues straightforward. Knowing the advice and documents are up to date and in line with legislation gives us the reassurance that we are acting correctly.

We will continue with our Chamber membership and feel the HR, Legal, and Health & Safety add-ons are very cost-effective.

Thank you to the South Cheshire Chamber and to the advisor and his colleagues within the Chamber resources.

If you would like to share a testimonial, please send it through to jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk

For further details and dates of forthcoming Chamber events visit my.sccci.co.uk/events.html

» For more information and event listings or if you wish to promote your own event please visit the Chamber Member Portal: www.sccci.co.uk

For more information on how the Chamber can help your business please contact Manager Jon Barnes on jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk

» We will always strive to help our businesses shape the economy for the better, and you can feedback to us on the issues affecting your business. We report both directly to local government and regional bodies and to central government through the British Chambers of Commerce network, so please get in touch with the team or email us at info@sccci.co.uk



Operations Director David Baxter with Anne, the Princess Royal



Left to right: John Lea, HRH, Keith Schofield, Tony Currie and Aaron Taylor welcome the Royal guest to the new Oat Milling Centre of Excellence



Left to right: James Lea, John Lea, Sir Phil Redmond and HM Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire Alexis Redmond welcome the Princess to Mornflake in Crewe

ROYAL VISITOR OPENS NEW MORNFLAKE OAT MILLING CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Mornflake, famed for its breakfast products worldwide, welcomed a Royal visitor marking a milestone anniversary and the launch of a new 'Oat Milling Centre of Excellence' at its Crewe headquarters.

The family firm, home to British Mighty Oats, played host to HRH The Princess Royal as it celebrates 350 years of milling and a state-of-the-art facility supporting its commitment to sustainability.

The Princess unveiled a plaque officially opening 'The Oat Milling Centre of Excellence' – a new build to bolster the company's move to sustainable packaging across the bulk of its product range.

The Royal guest heard about the history of Mornflake which is Britain's fourth oldest family-owned company, spanning 15 generations of the Lea family starting with William Lea who began milling oats in Swettenham in 1675 – nine years after the Great Fire of London.

Today it's an ambassador for Crewe of global renown with products reaching breakfast tables in 80 different countries including across Asia, Africa, and even the Caribbean.

Mornflake is a fierce ambassador for British agriculture and the Princess, well-known for her interest in rural affairs, heard how it supports the livelihoods of over 200 British farmers contracted to grow its oats.

Her Royal Highness, accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, Lady Redmond MBE, was greeted by Mr John Lea and his sons, James and Edward and their children.

Managing director James said:

"This is a very special year for us, celebrating 350 years of the family milling business. We've marked it in many ways from donations to community organisations to planting trees and a big party for staff, family and friends at Crewe Alexandra FC."



Left to right: HRH with James Lea, John Lea, Samanta Adderley, Amanda Leigh and Andrew Rutter.



HRH was presented with posies

“The visit from HRH The Princess Royal was of course the icing on the cake. She was genuinely interested in what we do and our passion for delivering a quality breakfast to millions of people worldwide.”

Mornflake is Crewe's oldest employer with a workforce of more than 300, including many long-serving employees and family members who have joined the business in different roles.

A few years ago it underwent a rebrand hailing Crewe home to 'Mornflake Mighty Oats' and opened up an Innovation Centre where the ingredients for tasty new lines are blended.

Throughout, there's a big commitment to sustainability. The company has managed to reduce its energy and water consumption by over 20% since 2015 by using wind turbine technology and solar panels.

Mornflake also uses only certified, sustainable palm oil, ensuring responsible production and protecting rainforests.

James added:

“Innovation is key and we strive to bring new flavours and textures to cereal-lovers who appreciate our unstinting dedication to quality and remain loyal to the brand. Our heritage means a lot but likewise it's important to move with the times and really focus on the future. Our new Oat Milling Centre of Excellence will strengthen our green credentials and provide a platform for innovation.”

The Princess was presented with posies by the Lea family grandchildren before being taken by helicopter to Mornflake's sister company, animal feed specialists HJ Lea Oakes in Malpas.

There, the keen horsewoman, heard about the processes involved in making horse

feed, sold under the brand name Dodson and Horrell, and unveiled a plaque officially opening a new Equine Centre of Excellence.

HJ Lea Oakes, also celebrating 350 years, works closely with Mornflake to ensure nothing gets wasted.

The breakfast firm sends the by-product from its oat milling process to animal feed supporting low carbon footprint raw materials.



HRH meeting Packing Room Supervisor Aaron Taylor and Packing Room Team Leader Karl Dooris



In the Spotlight with...



BENTLEY



**Cheshire College
South & West**



The Value of Apprenticeships: Building Skills, Careers and Community at Cheshire College

Apprenticeships have become one of the most effective pathways for young people and career changers to gain valuable skills, hands-on experience and recognised qualifications—all while earning a wage.

But apprenticeships aren't just for new or young recruits; they're also an excellent way for businesses to upskill their existing teams and invest in the loyal people who are already making their business thrive.

They serve as a vital bridge between education and the workplace, helping to address skills shortages, fuel local economic growth, and support businesses in building a talented workforce ready to meet tomorrow's challenges.

At Cheshire College – South & West, apprenticeships are much more than training programmes—they represent a commitment to fostering innovation, nurturing talent, and strengthening partnerships with leading employers like Bentley Motors.

"Apprenticeships are at the heart of our mission to equip students with real-world skills that open doors to fulfilling careers," says Jasbir Dhesi OBE, Principal and CEO of Cheshire College. "By working closely with employers, we ensure our programmes remain relevant and impactful, benefiting both students and the local economy."

From health and social care, engineering and manufacturing, to business, construction, digital technology, and hospitality, apprenticeships at Cheshire College are designed in collaboration with employers to meet current market needs. This means apprentices develop the exact skills, knowledge, and behaviours required to succeed in today's competitive job market.

How Apprenticeships Work

Apprenticeships combine on-the-job training with classroom learning. While some apprentices may only work four days a week alongside one day in college, some apprenticeships involve little to no weekly college attendance, depending on the course structure. They earn a salary from their employer while gaining nationally recognised qualifications.

Apprenticeships can last from 15 months up to four years, depending on the industry and the apprentice's starting level. Anyone aged 16 or over who is not in full-time education can apply, with entry requirements varying by programme.

The College supports apprentices through every step, from matching them with suitable employers to providing financial advice and bursaries where eligible.

Bentley Motors: Investing in Tomorrow's Talent Today

Bentley Motors, a global leader in luxury automotive manufacturing and a long-standing apprenticeship partner of Cheshire College, works closely with the College to provide apprenticeships across Manufacturing, Engineering, Business, Digital, and Project Management. This diverse range of programmes offers aspiring professionals hands-on experience and industry-relevant skills.

Nigel Tew, R&D Director – Body & Trim at Bentley, stresses the importance of apprenticeships in the company's future:

"As we enter an exciting new era of electrified vehicles, it is essential for Bentley to establish a safe, reliable training infrastructure.

"Importantly, we need to ensure all our existing staff and new starters joining the business (including apprentices) follow approved training."

The company also supports Cheshire College by providing access to its first-ever high-voltage hybrid vehicle, the Bentayga Hybrid, housed at the College's dedicated training facility. This allows apprentices to develop expertise in cutting-edge technology and prepares them for the automotive sector's evolving demands.



Beyond apprenticeship delivery, the partnership includes upskilling opportunities for Bentley's wider workforce. For example, a bespoke training programme is helping non-engineering staff enhance their understanding of electronic systems—supporting the company's transition towards autonomous and electric vehicles.

Jasbir Dhesi OBE, Principal and CEO of Cheshire College, commented on the strategic value of this ongoing collaboration:

“Our partnership with Bentley Motors exemplifies how industry and education can come together to create meaningful opportunities for students and employers. By working closely with one of the world's most prestigious automotive brands, we're able to deliver cutting-edge training that benefits our students, supports business growth, and strengthens the regional economy.”

From Apprentice to Award Winner: Harry Grant's Journey of Excellence

Harry Grant, a former Level 4 Engineering Manufacturing Technician apprentice at Bentley Motors, was named the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) Most Improved Apprentice of the Year.

Harry has developed advanced skills in complex manufacturing techniques and has taken on leadership responsibilities during his apprenticeship at Bentley Motors and Cheshire College. His progress throughout the programme has been recognised through awards and commendations. Leslie Sinclair, Harry's apprenticeship assessor, added:

“Guiding Harry through his apprenticeship has been a privilege. His commitment to excellence and constant drive to improve have earned him this well-deserved recognition.”

Harry himself acknowledges the support that made this possible:

“I want to thank my tutors John and Dan, as well as Leslie for their invaluable guidance. It's encouraging to see the hard work pay off and to be recognised at this level.”

Preparing Apprentices for Success

Helen Nellist, Deputy Principal and Deputy CEO of Cheshire College, also explains:

“Harry's success highlights the incredible potential of apprenticeships as a pathway to rewarding careers. His dedication and development reflect the high standards that our apprentices uphold, and it's a testament to how apprenticeships can transform lives and industries alike.”

“Our apprenticeships blend academic learning with practical experience, so students gain qualifications alongside confidence and skills to thrive in the workplace. Partnerships with employers like Bentley ensure our training is current, relevant, and innovative.”

Helen added, “Collaborations with employers allow us to embed real-world challenges into our curriculum. This benefits students and ensures local businesses have access to skilled, job-ready talent.”

Looking Ahead: A Bright Future for Apprentices in South Cheshire

With a comprehensive range of apprenticeship options and strong links to industry, Cheshire College is well-positioned to help both individuals and businesses thrive. Apprenticeships provide learners with rewarding careers and give companies a competitive edge by building a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.

» **To learn more about apprenticeships and current opportunities, visit www.ccs.ac.uk or contact the apprenticeship team at apprenticeships@ccsw.ac.uk or call 01244 656555.**



Message from our President



Don't Forget Nantwich

Most discussions about the economy in Crewe and Nantwich are quite understandably focused on Crewe which is the largest town and historically the most heavily industrialised and commercialised part of South Cheshire.

We should not however overlook the many different ways in which Nantwich and its surrounding rural area also makes a valuable contribution to the overall prosperity of the area.

Although the population of Nantwich has grown substantially over recent years, the town centre has maintained its historic market town character and continues to attract visitors from all over the country and abroad.

Visitors are not only attracted by its history and beautiful period buildings but also its shopping which comprises a fine range of high quality independent retailers, including restaurants and coffee shops, clothing, food, and general

domestic retailers, not to forget the various pubs, wine and gin outlets.

The town has also maintained its traditional Market which operates twice a week and now also provides a programme of regular Farmers and Antique markets.

Over the years, the town has also developed a reputation for hosting a number of major events including The Battle of Nantwich re-enactment, The Jazz and Blues Festival, The Nantwich Agricultural Show, The Nantwich Food Festival, The Nantwich Roots Festival and the Words and Music Festival.

All of these annual events attract a wide range of visitors who give a considerable boost to the local tourism economy and in particular the hospitality sector which is well provided for across the area by a number of quality hotels, guest houses, B & B and farmhouse accommodation.

The Rural Economy has always played a large part in the prosperity of South Cheshire and continues to do so. Over the years however there has been a move away from reliance on pure agriculture and food production and many farmers have diversified their businesses by providing a range of services including, coffee shops and restaurants, adventure playgrounds, business units, and living accommodation through barn conversions.

Nantwich can also boast having Reaseheath College on its doorstep which is one of the leading Agricultural Colleges in the country and not only a great supporter of the local agricultural sector but also a provider of a range of courses and support services for engineering and contracting business from further afield.

Nantwich is also an important part of the canal network and a popular stop-off for canal enthusiasts. The importance of the canals to the local economy has been enhanced in recent years by the creation and development of a number of highly successful Marinas which have proven to be a major addition to the areas tourism offering.

Nantwich's economy however is not all about tourism, leisure and agriculture, and it has its fair share of small to medium size businesses as well, particularly in the financial, legal and professional/ business services sectors. Most of these are either located in the town centre or at the nearby Alvaston Business Park, Princes Court and Nantwich Trade Park sites.

In addition, there are also a number of rural business scattered around the area and whilst most of these are agriculture related there are a number of businesses operating out of locations such as Park View Business Centre at Combermere.

Overall therefore, whilst the economies of Crewe and Nantwich are different in nature, they are nevertheless complementary and form an attractive combination and diversity, each of which makes a positive contribution to the overall prosperity of South Cheshire.

The Chamber supports all businesses regardless of sector, size or location and will continue to provide the services that will ensure that South Cheshire will continue to prosper in the future.

John Dunning
President

Message from our Chair



Spring to Summer 2025 - What's Changed?

As I write this in early August, reflecting on the topics covered in our last edition back in April, it's clear that many of the predicted issues have now become reality. Most notably, the increases in wage costs—driven by changes to National Insurance and the National Minimum Wage—are now showing up in our figures here at Aqueduct Marina. I'm sure many businesses across the region are experiencing similar pressures.

While we had budgeted for some of these increases, we didn't fully account for the

knock-on effect on higher-paid staff, who are understandably seeking to maintain the pay gap between themselves and junior colleagues. This is proving to be a tricky balancing act.

At the recent British Chambers of Commerce conference, which I had the pleasure of attending, Andrew Bailey, Governor of the Bank of England, hinted at similar challenges nationwide, with perhaps business responding with cost controls: reducing available hours, holding off on replacing leavers, and offering lower pay rises to higher earners—all in an effort to manage the overall wage bill.

On another front, recent changes to Business Property Relief and Inheritance Tax have forced some difficult, but necessary, conversations with our accountants and within the family. These discussions are not only time-consuming but also come with a financial cost—diverting energy away from day-to-day leadership.

Despite all this, it was a real pleasure to see such a strong turnout at the recent North Cheshire Chamber Awards Night. The room was full of passionate businesspeople and their teams, all celebrating their successes. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in

our region, and from what I saw, there's still plenty of optimism and potential for growth. The celebrations at Mottram Hall went on well into the early hours—a great sign of community and resilience.

Looking ahead, international trade disruptions and ongoing regional conflicts continue to cast a shadow. If anyone has a crystal ball, I'd love to borrow it. For now, though, we must navigate the uncertainty as best we can.

Closer to home, climate change is making itself felt in my world of inland marinas. A large portion of the canal network is currently closed due to water shortages. On the brighter side, our newly installed solar panels have had no shortage of sunshine, and the campsite has been buzzing with guests enjoying the early summer weather.

As the new football season kicks off, I wish all our local teams the very best of luck. I've set up my Fantasy Football team once again—though I expect to be languishing near the bottom of the South Cheshire Chamber Fantasy league before long!

Robert Parton
Chair

New trade deals for Crewe and Nantwich: access to new markets and cutting out red tape



This quarter, I welcomed the government's landmark deal with the EU in Parliament, following the announcement of similar deals with India and the US in Parliament.

For local businesses in Crewe and Nantwich, it is vital that we break down the barriers to their participation in external markets, without compromising on the quality of our goods and services.

When I was elected to Parliament, many local business owners told me that rising costs were a key barrier to growth. There are lots of factors that play into those increases – lack of a diverse energy supply, higher land prices and supply chain disruptions to name a few.

These businesses are integral to Crewe and Nantwich. Their struggle means people cannot afford their weekly shop or to keep on top of their bills. In the constituency, it means the high street falls behind, and communities suffer.

The new trade agreements affect key sectors for Crewe and Nantwich, such as

automotives, agriculture, food and beverages and infrastructure. These negotiations require strong leadership and sensible decision making. Under Labour, we've been able to sign these agreements without kowtowing to foreign governments.

I know that many entrepreneurs are keen for detail and certainty when it comes to trade. I am glad that both the EU and US deals have been signed, and negotiations with India have concluded. It seems like good things do come in threes, but I know there's more in the pipeline – plans for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Gulf states are almost finalised.

US Economic Prosperity Deal

The US deal is expected to boost existing exports from the UK, with the removal of beef, steel and aluminium trade barriers. In particular, the government has negotiated reduced reciprocal tariffs in beef without a weakening of food standards – meaning no hormone-treated beef will be infiltrating the market.

Car export tariffs have also been reduced from 27.5% to 10%, which I know those working in conjunction with Bentley Motors will be glad to hear. Not only will this enable Bentley to continue selling its cars into US markets, but it also provides businesses in the supply chain with greater security.

India Free Trade Agreement

The new deal with India will benefit businesses involved in the export of a variety of products, including whiskies and gin, cosmetics, medical devices, advanced machinery and lamb, locking in tariff reductions across 90% of UK exports.

The UK has also negotiated the introduction of complementary processes like improved customs procedures and new digital systems.

Sectors like sugar, milled rice, pork, chicken, and eggs are excluded from the UK's tariff cuts. This approach ensures that the UK market remains protected from lower-priced imports in sensitive categories.

I hope that these changes will help to unlock external markets for smaller businesses in Crewe and Nantwich, by streamlining pathways to exporting goods.

Updates to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU

The UK's new agreements with the EU will make it easier for businesses to export food and drink, by reducing the red tape at the border left in the wake of the Brexit negotiations. This should drive down the costs for small businesses looking to export their products abroad.

Most routine border checks on animal and plant shipments to and from the EU will be dropped. This means the UK can sell raw burgers and sausages back into the EU for the first time since Brexit, something I know will affect many businesses working in the meat industry and its supply chain.

Gulf States Free Trade Agreement

The government is in the final stages of negotiating an FTA with the Gulf Cooperation Council. This will be the first of its kind, including countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

This agreement aims to expand trade in key sectors such as energy, manufacturing, and services, as well as the car industry and financial services. The government estimates it will eventually add an extra £8.6bn a year to trade between the UK and GCC countries by 2035.

For Crewe and Nantwich, this FTA will be particularly beneficial to industrial or energy-intensive businesses, giving the UK access to diversified energy sources.

» If you have any questions about these changes, please don't hesitate to get in touch at Connor.Naismith.MP@parliament.uk



Crewe suffragist Ada recognised with blue plaque



The Crewe Engineering & Design UTC students at the unveiling of their plinth design, alongside the Mayor of Crewe (Credit: Peter Robinson)

A blue plaque was unveiled by the Mayor of Crewe, Cllr Sally Graham, and students from Crewe Engineering and Design UTC to commemorate the suffragist and women's rights campaigner, Ada Nield Chew.

The plaque was installed on a custom-made plinth, designed by students at Crewe Engineering and Design UTC. Four all-female teams submitted designs for the plinth and the final design is an amalgamation of two. The bobbin and needle details represent Ada's position as a tailor at Compton's Clothing Factory in the 1890's.

At the plaque unveiling, Ada was given recognition for speaking out at her own personal cost, to support women and girls who often had no voice. Thanks to campaigning by people like Ada, we now have women in full time education who are

actively learning and applying the skills she was fighting for and the plaque will be a lasting tribute to the progress made.

Crewe Town Council would like to thank South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce for allowing the plaque to be sited at Bridle Road, in front of the factory. Will Chitty, Principal of the Crewe Engineering and Design UTC facilitated the plinth design process and Chris Geddes, Director of Area Welding Services Ltd was responsible for bringing the plinth to life from the students' design.

About Ada: In May 1894 Ada Nield Chew began writing to the Crewe Chronicle about the conditions at the factory, signing her letters as 'A Crewe Factory Girl.' She criticised the conditions that women and girls were expected to work in, noting they were charged for tea breaks and expected to work long hours to earn 8 shillings a week, around £33 a week today. Ada had to leave Compton's when she was unmasked as the Crewe Factory Girl. She went on to join the Independent Labour Party and worked with the Local Trades Council, as well as actively supporting the women's suffrage movement.

Crewe Town Council has created a number of heritage resources (suitable for use in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2) about the 'Crewe Factory Girl', which includes transcripts of Ada's letters, images, newspaper articles and a video. Go to www.crewetowncouncil.gov.uk/council-services-2/crewe-heritage/heritage-resources/

A Crewe Town Council spokesperson said: "The unveiling of Ada's blue plaque was an important day for Crewe and one that was five years in the making. In celebrating Ada's contributions to furthering the rights of women, as well as the skills and future potential of the students from Crewe Engineering and Design UTC, we are proud that this project has brought the community together."

Will Chitty, Principal at Crewe Engineering and Design UTC, added: "We are were so excited to finally unveil Ada's plaque which is set on the students' beautifully designed and manufactured plinth. It is wonderful that the students will be able to lay claim to an important landmark in come."



The Ada Nield Chew blue plaque sited outside the factory on Bridle Road in Crewe (Credit: Peter Robinson)

Crewe Day Festival proves a big hit drawing thousands

The first Crewe Day Festival took place in July attracting thousands of visitors to festivities in the town centre. The family-friendly festival, offering a range of free events over the weekend, proved a big success and will return next year.

Attractions included a colourful carnival procession featuring 13ft tall Carnival Queen puppets from Global Grooves and the Parade Giant Wheel from Autin Dance, alongside a community cast of 140 performers from local organisations including Hopes & Beams, Camm Street Gymnastics, TGA Street Dance Crewe, Stepz School of Dance and the Wilderness Tribe.

There were live community performances on Memorial Square from The Swinging Woodpeckers, Crewe Concert Band and Faye McCallum, compered by the Cat Radio, as well as a visit from the steam loco Black 5 Engine 45212 to Crewe Heritage Centre to celebrate Crewe Day.

Other attractions were Fun Crewe Day Crafts run by Crewe Creates and the Crewe Lyceum, the Co-Op's celebration at Crewe Heritage Centre of the 180th anniversary of the first cooperative society in Crewe plus the UN declaring 2025 the Year of International Cooperatives. Families also enjoyed an artisan market brought to the event by JDL Mini Markets and Stanworth's

mini-fairground on Prince Albert Street.

A key part of the Crewe Day Festival activities is community participation and local organisations prepared for the main event day with Autin Dance and Global Grooves by learning new skills such as dance and expressive movement at workshops which were shown off during the parades.

What is Crewe Day? Crewe Day commemorates the anniversary of the first trains passing through Crewe Station, during the opening of the Birmingham to Manchester and Liverpool line on 4th July 1837. This is a key moment in the town's industrial heritage and a catalyst to the creation of the Crewe we know today. Crewe is an amazing place – it deserves to be celebrated for its community, heritage and unique identity.

Get involved: The Crewe Day Festival will return on an annual basis to commemorate the arrival of the first trains in Crewe and to celebrate the Crewe community as it is today. Local organisations, individuals and suppliers that would like to be involved in future years can find out more from the Crewe Town Council website:

www.crewetowncouncil.gov.uk/crewe-day-festival

A Crewe Town Council spokesperson commented: "It was fantastic to see so many people come together in Crewe town

centre as we launched this vibrant annual cultural event for the first time. The Crewe Day Festival celebrates Crewe's rich culture, heritage, community and unique identity and it was the people of Crewe that made the event a success. We can't wait to see the community participation elements of the event increase in future years and would love to see the festival grow in 2026."



Scenes from Crewe Day Festival (Credit: Peter Robinson)

Afford Bond pays tribute to long-serving accountancy colleagues



Nantwich accountancy firm Afford Bond has marked the long service of two colleagues who have notched up more than 70 years' service between them.

The firm on Wellington Road staged a special lunch to bid a fond farewell to Practice Director Jeff Atkinson after 24 years of service and to congratulate Account Manager John Morris on his 50 years with the firm.

Jeff, who aims to spend more time travelling with his wife in their motorhome, said: "I will always be very grateful to the directors of Afford Bond for their support and camaraderie over the years.

"I have had the opportunity to take on a number of roles, including several years working directly with clients, heading up our payroll bureau and also running the Wilmslow office. In 2012, I returned to my previous role of running the internal workings

of the firm, as Practice Director – a role I have thoroughly enjoyed.

"I have seen Afford Bond grow and evolve into the business it is today - a thriving, energised, client-focussed firm working in the best interests of its clients and staff, and I am sure it will continue to go from strength to strength."

The firm employs more than 80 across its offices in Nantwich, Wilmslow and Manchester and dozens turned up for the lunch event which included a surprise ice cream cart for Jeff.

They gathered in the picturesque grounds of the Nantwich office at 31 Wellington Road – home to Afford Bond for over 50 years.

John, who was 19 when he began his accountancy career, shared stories of his first day. "It was 1975 and I brought along my calculator which I was quickly told to pack away! Things were done manually back then

quite different to the computerised systems we have today."

Away from work John, 69, looks after a menagerie of pets. He added: "I've loved every day at Afford Bond and have particularly enjoyed seeing our trainees gain confidence and experience just as I did as a junior. I can't think of a better place to work and have no retirement plans just yet."

Afford Bond can be traced back to the 1920's when Norman Afford set up his practice at District Bank House in Nantwich town centre. Paul Edwards, one of ten directors at the helm, said: "The firm has grown but our culture is to nurture and create environment where our employees thrive and feel supported. It's a positive working environment where clients benefit from long-standing relationships. John is a prime example of that.

"We're sad to lose Jeff but can't compete with his travel plans! We have an excellent replacement for him in Joanne Scane who will steer the ship and promote our values for many years to come."

» **Afford Bond provides accounts, audit, taxation, payroll and corporate finance services to a wide variety of sectors across the region. Contact Afford Bond on 01270 623731 or email enquiries@affordbond.com**

SME Leaders Connect set for autumn launch



A new scheme is set to launch offering SMEs a chance to step out of their business and spend vital time focusing on their resilience and wellbeing.

SME Leaders Connect is spearheaded by South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and the social enterprise Learning Well Training and Wellbeing.

Learning Well founder Kate Blakemore said:

"Joining SME Leaders Connect offers a unique opportunity to step out of the day-to-day pressures of running a business and focus on you – your wellbeing, your mindset, and your personal growth. Through honest conversations and peer support, you'll gain clarity, confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose as a leader now and in the future."

The aim is to support SME leaders who juggle multiple roles, carry high emotional and financial burdens, and often lack access to peer support structures found in larger organisations.

These can include business owners in the early stages of growth, leaders who may not have access to formal mentoring and entrepreneurs feeling isolated in their role.

There will be regular sessions throughout the autumn and winter months offering the opportunity for peer-led learning, reflection and growth.

Topics will include:

- Managing stress, burn-out and isolation.
- Building and maintaining strong teams
- Navigating change to handle uncertainty, policy shifts and market changes
- Work-life balance and boundaries

Learning Well director Diane Wright, former Chair of the South Cheshire Chamber, is involved in devising and delivering the programme.

Diane said:

"Leading an SME can be a rewarding but isolating journey."

Providing a safe, non-judgmental space for peer-led learning, will help leaders build resilience, both personally and professionally."

It will support their mental health and wellbeing and ultimately contribute to stronger, healthier and more sustainable businesses."

SME Leaders Connect sessions will be staged every two weeks in October, November and December.

» **To find out more please contact Courtney Dodd on 01270 445404 or courtney.dodd@sccci.co.uk**

Ancient Villages - Seven Miles Round Nantwich' exhibition opens at Nantwich Museum



Nantwich Museum aims to record the past of not just the town itself but also the surrounding countryside, and this year the museum's Research group have focused on villages around Nantwich, many of which are older than the town itself. 'Ancient Villages - Seven Miles Round Nantwich' has opened at the Pillory Street Museum and is due to run until Saturday 11 October.

The exhibition was inspired in part by Nantwich historian James Hall's notebook '7 Miles Round Nantwich', which will be on display during the exhibition on loan from the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. The notebook was compiled at the end of the nineteenth century encompassing census details, notes about the local villages and interpretations of a range of topics. Key buildings and features were noted, anecdotes and stories recounted by the inhabitants recorded, plus detailed sections including geology and natural

features, fluctuations in populations and picturesque spots – almost a travel guide. The suspicion is that James had in mind a sequel to his major history book published in 1883, but never completed the task.

From this base, the Research Group has developed an informative and interactive exhibition covering a wide range of local village-related topics including Place Names, Churches and Chapels, Rural Pubs, Transport, Zoos, Prominent People all interspersed with Quirky Stories.

The Museum was delighted to win the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador of the Year 2024. The award recognises businesses that have made a significant impact on the South Cheshire community and represent the area's excellence to other regions.

» For further information contact Nantwich Museum on enquiries@nantwichmuseum.org.uk or telephone 01270 627104.

Post Office makes first class effort for Nantwich Food Bank



As seen in Nantwich Life, the town's Post Office is helping to make a 'special delivery' to families in need after becoming a collection centre for the town Food Bank.

The Pepper Street landmark has collection boxes out for donations of non-perishable food items as part of its continued drive to support the Nantwich community.

Colleagues regularly make charity collections but it's the first time the post office has become a designated collection centre for the food bank.

Manager Austin Foster said:

"The cost of living crisis continues to be an issue for so many local families and we wanted to do our bit.

"Christmas is often the time when people think of giving to the food bank but they are in need all year so we've

started our collection in the summer.

"We get a big footfall in the post office, over 3000 people a week, boosted by the fact NatWest has closed and its customers are coming to us. We hope to do really well for the food bank."

Nantwich Food Bank updates its 'shopping list' regularly and currently sought after are non-perishables such as tinned and packet soups, custard, long life milk and fruit juice and tinned meats, stew, curry and vegetables. Ladies and gents toiletries are also being collected.

Already there's been a good response with customers filling one box. The Post Office has also installed a new community notice board where charities and organisations can advertise their events for free.

The community drive is working out so well Austin and his team have begun collecting for another charity – the Blue Cross in tribute to their many four-legged customers who visit with their owners and wait patiently in the queue!

» For more information on supporting Nantwich Food Bank go to nantwich.foodbank.org.uk

Right at Home launches new Senior's Social Café in Nantwich



A new "Senior's Social Café" has been launched in Nantwich by local care organisation, Right at Home.

The café aims to help tackle feelings of loneliness and isolation that some older people who live alone suffer from.

Right at Home, based on Welsh Row in Nantwich, teamed up with the M&S café at their food store on Beam Street to host the monthly event.

The café is designed to be a welcoming space with no judgement and is also dementia friendly and accessible.

It runs every first Monday of the month from 1.30pm to 2.30pm.

Zoe Cooper, of Right at Home, said: "We chose this time and space so that the café is central to Nantwich, therefore you could pop in whilst out doing your shopping or after a trip to the library!

"We set it up as a way for us to give back to the community, help tackle feelings of loneliness and to help connect people.

"We want to help people connect and feel at home, we have team members at the café every week who can help give advice, but the

main goal is just to get people together!"

Right at Home colleague Tilly Vickers added: "The Senior's Social Café is very relaxed, simply a place to talk, make new friends and enjoy a drink."

Anyone is able to join the café, no invitation needed, and the first drink is on Right at Home.

» **For more details call them on 01270 257 347.**

Read all about it – Nantwich has a new newspaper!

Nantwich Life was launched in August 2024 to provide the town and surrounding area with its first truly independent and free newspaper.

The newspaper provides great stories, features, pictures and columns each month.

It includes special features such as Down Memory Lane, Top of the Class, as well as What's On and Sport pages, all focused on Nantwich.

With more than 2,000 copies printed every month, and over 30 local stockists, the paper is available to everyone in every corner of the town and every village.

It's also helping to break down social isolation in our rural areas, thanks to partnerships with the mobile library, and home care companies like Right at Home and SureCare Central.

This ensures elderly or infirm residents who struggle with mobility are receiving a copy so they can keep up to date and in touch with local news and views.

With support from many local organisations advertising, the paper has been a huge success and this revenue has helped plan for its longer-term sustainability and with the potential to expand its pagination, print run and frequency.

It also ensures MORE residents than ever before can keep up to date with important news and information, with wide coverage of our local councils, public sector bodies, charities, businesses, schools and inspiring individual successes.

Editor Pete Leydon, who launched the local online news brand Nantwich News Ltd 15 years ago, developed the newspaper concept in early 2024 after researching into similar independent print products around the country.

He said: "It became clear to me that there is still a real demand for print. That people like the physical copy of a newspaper or magazine in their hands, to read and digest at their leisure.

"Unfortunately, larger legacy media companies like Reach plc have shrunk or closed down their local newspapers which don't feed larger city populations, purely for financial reasons.

"This has left a desert of news in many 'Shire' areas, and this is bad for democracy and bad for local communities to feel connected.

"We need to inform people of the decisions being made which impact them, of the charities and organisations that need our support, and of the successes and

inspirational stories of individuals which bring us a sense of joy, belonging and community spirit.

"Nantwich Life was launched to fill that gap – and I'm overwhelmed and humbled at how successful this has been and the feedback we receive."

» **For all content and advertising inquiries, email us on nantwichlife@thenantwichnews.co.uk or call Pete Leydon on 07906 492664**

A Lifeline to Digital Confidence



ASSURANT®



From setting up a smartphone to navigating online banking, digital skills are no longer optional. Yet millions across the UK remain digitally excluded, often older individuals, people living alone, or those on low incomes.

For many, something as simple as booking a doctor's appointment online can feel overwhelming or even impossible.

That's why, on 1 July, Assurant proudly launched the Digital Helpline in partnership with Lloyds Banking Group. This new service is designed to offer friendly, expert support to those left behind in our increasingly digital society.

Staffed by a newly trained team based in Crewe and supported by our Device Care Centre (DCC), the helpline offers personal guidance with setting up devices, creating email accounts, using video calls, managing online shopping and more. Eligible customers may also receive a tablet and SIM with six months of data, fully set up and ready to use.

For those whose first language isn't English, a translation service ensures no one is excluded. And for anyone needing face-to-face help, our Countrywide retail network of iSmash and Pocket Geek Stores are ready to step in and support.

Support is offered with warmth, patience and understanding. Every interaction is a chance to help someone gain confidence, feel less isolated and reconnect with the world around them.

At its heart, the Digital Helpline is about empowerment, removing barriers and helping people live fuller, more connected lives.

» For more information visit:
assurant.co.uk or call: 0330 041 0041

Bentley Motors marks 25 years of Additive Manufacturing capabilities



BENTLEY



Bentley Motors is marking 25 years of Additive Manufacturing (AM) – widely known as 3D printing – at its headquarters in Crewe, having invested significantly into its facility and technologies in recent years. The journey, which began with a commitment to in-house 3D printing to support the development of Bentley's first generation Continental GT, has evolved into a state-of-the-art facility that's home to 13 machines operating six cutting-edge technologies.

Originally housed in the oldest building at the Pym's Lane site, A1 – which is now being transformed into the future assembly line for Bentley's first BEV – the 3D printing facility has been relocated into the company's new Engineering Technical Centre, reinforcing

Bentley's position at the forefront of innovation in advanced product development and manufacturing techniques.

Bentley's Additive Manufacturing facility leverages a diverse range of advanced technologies, each offering unique printing capabilities that support the entire development and production lifecycle across multiple business areas.

A recent industry first example was on 'The Black Rose', a special customer commission, and one of only three right-hand-drive Batur. The first ever expression of three dimensional printed solid rose gold was used, adding up to 210 grams of hallmarked 18-karat rose gold to the interior of the coachbuilt coupe at key driver touchpoints.

Dr. Matthias Rabe, Bentley's Member of the Board for R&D, said: "Additive manufacturing continues to play a vital role in the product development process, and our capability and expertise in this field has gone from strength to strength. The ability to rapidly produce and iterate components has advanced how we develop our models and offers further opportunities as we electrify our model range and create our next generation of extraordinary cars."

The AM facility enables optimal material and process selection for every application. From large, functional components produced through Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM)

to aerodynamic test models created by Multi-Jet Fusion (MJF) technologies.

The team has even 3D printed a W12 engine block scaled down to just 5 mm wide that still retains every detail of the engine thanks to a Lithography-based Metal Manufacturing (LMM) technology - a pioneering approach to 3D metal printing that delivers industry-leading precision. These technologies support everything from scale models and rapid prototyping, to 'single-print' parts and bespoke tooling solutions that not only accelerate the product development process, but make it more sustainable through reducing waste materials.

Beyond product development, Bentley's Additive Manufacturing expertise has also made a positive difference in the local community and beyond. The team produced over 20,000 items of PPE to support NHS staff and local care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has been exploring methods to make their activities more sustainable, such as taking excess polymer powder from the MJF process and reusing it as a filament in FDM printing – which accounts for around 60% of the material output from the Additive Manufacturing facility.

» For more information please call:
01270 653653

Crewe Campus Shines: Student success celebrated at Cheshire College Awards



Throughout the night, nominees were recognised for their dedication, creativity, and progress across curriculum areas including Engineering, Science, Health and Social Care, Digital Technologies, Performing Arts, and more.

Following her award of Science Student of the Year, Cristina Lemos-Martins said, "I feel accomplished because I've worked hard for the past two years and my work has been recognised." Also in attendance was Gergo Erdelyi-Bonto who scooped the Business & Computing Award, he said, "It feels pretty good, I wasn't expecting it, so it was a nice surprise."

Principal and CEO Jasbir Dhesi OBE said: "The Student Awards at our Crewe Campus are a true highlight of the year. They shine a light on the remarkable achievements of our students — not just in the classroom, but in the way they contribute to college life and support one another. The energy, talent and commitment we see here in Crewe is inspiring, and we're proud to celebrate every individual who's made their time at College count."

» **Applications remain open for September 2025, with a wide range of full-time courses, apprenticeships and higher education options available.**

Cheshire College – South & West's Crewe Campus came alive with celebration and pride as students, staff, and families gathered for the annual Student Awards Evening, recognising the hard work, resilience, and achievements of students from across a wide range of subject areas.

Held in the heart of the Crewe Campus, the event offered a moment to reflect on the journeys of students who have not only excelled in their studies but made a lasting impact on their college community.

Guests were welcomed with a canapé reception prepared and served by the College's Hospitality and Catering students.

'Picnic on the Pitch' marks 350th anniversary



play area, as well as games on the pitch such as beat the goalie and crazy golf.

Families were treated to wood-fired pizza, hog roast, fish and chips and ice cream, and many braved the blustery weather to lie out picnic rugs on the pitch.

As part of their 350th anniversary celebrations, Mornflake in Crewe and HJ Lea Oakes at Aston near Nantwich have joined forces to plant 350 trees at selected sites and employees were each gifted a sapling.

Mornflake managing director James Lea said: "Our heritage is important, but equally so is the loyalty of our employees, and we wanted to make it a special day for them.

"Family values are at the heart of what we do and their welfare is key. We're proud so many local people have chosen to spend their whole working lives with us and our reputation as an employer on both sides of the family business is an enviable one."

The sister companies trace their history back to 1675 when William Lea first began milling in Cheshire. A remarkable 15 generations later, his descendants are still at the helm, helping to support the livelihoods of British farmers who grow the oats used in their products.

» **For more on the Mornflake story, products and recipes go to mornflake.com**

Hundreds South Cheshire employees were given a day to remember as Mornflake and its sister company HJ Lea Oakes staged a giant 350th anniversary event.

The family-owned milling businesses, one producing breakfast products of global repute and the other animal feeds for the nation's farms, welcomed more than 800 members of staff and their families to 'Picnic on the Pitch' at Crewe Alexandra FC.

Mornflake, the football club's long-standing sponsors, arranged special Sunday afternoon access to the pitch and function

rooms, where families enjoyed entertainment and food.

The night before, there was a football match between Mornflake and HJ Lea Oakes employees, cheered on by colleagues.

Players in Mornflake's trademark orange colours and HJ Lea Oakes in its green brought friendly rivalry to the pitch, normally only graced by the Railwaymen and visiting sides. Mornflake were the triumphant winners, beating the 'greens' 3-0 and their trophy was on show.

The event included many family attractions - a funfair, magicians, face-painting and soft

Radius backs South Cheshire Chamber as Patron



Radius CEO Lee Everett (centre) with Chamber chief executive Paul Colman and chair Robert Parton at the company's UK headquarters on Emperor Way, Crewe Business Park

South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce is celebrating Radius, a fleet mobility and connectivity company, joining its mission to support local business and boost prosperity.

Radius, which employs more than 1,000 people across multiple sites in Crewe, is backing the Chamber as a new Patron. Founded 35 years ago, in Holmes Chapel as UK Fuels, a truck fuel card business, has experienced phenomenal growth, and now

boasts 55 offices in 19 different countries.

It keeps the world moving with a range of fleet mobility and connectivity solutions, including fuel cards, telematics, vehicle leasing, EV charge points and telecoms.

Chamber Chair Robert Parton said: "We're very proud to have Radius onboard as Patrons. As a global leader in its field, Radius is one of the UK's fastest-growing companies, expanding to meet global business needs. It's also a home-grown success story which continues to fly the flag for South Cheshire

with its UK headquarters in Crewe Business Park."

Globally, Radius employs around 2,800 people across its international sites and serves more than 450,000 customers. New growth areas of business include electric vehicle charging solutions and telematics providing vehicle tracking, dash cameras, and asset tracking devices and software.

CEO Lee Everett said: "As Chamber Patrons, we look forward to being part of the community of like-minded business leaders in South Cheshire, who regularly communicate and collaborate to ensure this remains a terrific location for us to invest in as our global headquarters.

"This requires not only an attractive physical infrastructure for the town, but also the support and development of our community in and around Crewe. After all, our employees based here are the backbone of the workforce we rely on to drive the business day in and day out."

He added: "We're proud of the role our business plays in Crewe and we'll continue to be an ambassador for the town. We encourage our partners from around the UK to jump on the train to visit us here, to see how well connected and convenient the town is, as well as come to the state-of-the-art facilities we, and other businesses, provide their teams."

Reaseheath honours student success at annual awards celebrations



Reaseheath College and University Centre celebrate the class of 2025.

Reaseheath College and University Centre celebrated the achievements of 1,233 Further Education students during three days of awards ceremonies held in June.

The events hosted at the Nantwich land-based college recognised academic

excellence, personal development, and contributions to college life, with families, friends, staff, and industry partners in attendance.

Awards were presented across all curriculum areas, including the Academies of Land and Environment; Animal, Equine and

Veterinary Nursing; Food and Rural Business; Engineering, Technology and Construction; Sport, Health and Public Services; and Foundation Learning and Life Skills.

Each ceremony featured a keynote speech from a former student now thriving in industry. Steph Nish, a graduate of the Eden Dairy Technology apprenticeship, now works in offshore wind energy. Emma Pemberton, who studied Sport and Outdoor Activities, is now a Trainee Bridge Inspector. Peter Watson, a former Animal Management student, now holds a technical leadership role at Chester Zoo.

The ceremonies also recognised students who achieved their Career Ready Passport, while 67 students were also celebrated for their published entries in the national Young Writers' Competition anthology, Fight or Flight.

Reaseheath Principal and CEO Marcus Clinton said: "These awards are a true reflection of our students' determination and growth. They leave us not only with valuable qualifications, but with real career-ready skills and life experiences that will help them stand out and succeed in their future pathways."

» Visit www.reaseheath.ac.uk or call: 01270 625131

Investing in People: How SG World nurtures talent through Apprenticeships



SG World has a clear strategy when it comes to apprenticeships. The policy is to think of apprentices as young people (at least in most cases) who want to be given the chance to pursue a career, a lot of the times without going to university, that combines education with work, at a pace and location that works in conjunction with their lifestyle choice. Perhaps they don't want to (or sometimes can't afford to) leave the parental home at this time. They don't want to be saddled with something between £30-£50,000 of debt which they have to pay back once they start full time employment. And sometimes further education full time just isn't what they want.

In times gone by, apprenticeships were seen as blue-collar roles, with some young people being exploited as cheap labour, with a disappointing drop out rate.

At SG World we like to believe we see it differently. Firstly, because the opportunities we offer range across the board. Marketing, Sales, Finance and even PA positions are the more common roles. Add in IT and although there are some opportunities on the 'shop floor' they are the rarity.

Why have we chosen this route? Well historically if you joined SG World, you would be there a long time. Even today we have members of the team that have in excess of

35 and even 40 years' service, and in July we celebrate one of our team who has racked up an eye watering 45 years with us.

In the intervening years, probably through the nineties until mid-2010s many of the younger population became very transient, which held back many companies from investing in training and development. At SG World, we have an approach when asked why we spend money on people to train and develop them, with the risk that they may leave. Mark Haase, our CEO, explains it this way, "It's not the training them and then the possibility of them leaving us that worries me, it's the not developing them and they end up staying!"

So, our strategy is to create these apprenticeship opportunities, which combines an underpinning of knowledge at college or through 3rd party providers, whilst also giving them the opportunity to 'learn on the job', and our success in this approach has meant both the young person and the organisation have a win-win situation. The person ends up in a role at SG World, one of their choosing, and a long-term opportunity. SG World then have individuals who know the culture and ways of the business and are valued employees with long term prospects.

2 examples of these are Beth Cann and Robbie Ransley. Beth joined as an apprentice, took exams whilst working in our Finance areas under the guidance of our Financial Director, Debbie Brandon-Sweeney. Now Beth is the Group Financial Controller, and a qualified Accountant, and says:

"Completing an Apprenticeship is possibly the best decision I've ever made, followed by the move to SG World. SG World fully supported the apprenticeship and all that comes with it, including making and learning from mistakes along the way. The exposure to all areas of Finance have meant I was able to apply the knowledge from the course to everyday scenarios and vice versa in an exam situation. The growth and development I have experienced at SG World has meant that I have moved through roles within the business and have worked my way into the role of Financial Controller in less than 10 years. SG World has also continued professional development supporting me with the next stage of study which is CIMA."

Robbie has come through the IT apprenticeship, is now the Technical Infrastructure Lead and has just completed his 10 years' service. Robbie says:

"Ten years in the business has flown and, in that time, I've learned a lot with the courses that I've completed, experiences that I've built up and friendships that I've made here. I hope to be here for a long time going forward."

Mark as CEO has said, "We remain committed to the apprenticeship route and have faith in the people who join us on the journey will both be an asset to themselves, and also SG World."

» For more information visit: sgworld.com



SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER 28TH ANNUAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Friday 14th November Crewe Hall Hotel & Spa

Shine a spotlight on your achievements and be part of South Cheshire's most prestigious business celebrations

AWARD CATEGORIES INCLUDE:

- ★ Ambassador Of The Year
- ★ Apprentice Of The Year
- ★ Business Of The Year
- ★ Contribution To The Community
- ★ Employer Of The Year
- ★ Excellence In Collaboration
- ★ Excellence In Customer Service
- ★ International Trader Of The Year
- ★ Small Business Of The Year
- ★ Start-Up Business Of The Year

NOMINATE YOUR BUSINESS



About the Department for Business and Trade, North of England



The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is an economic growth department. We ensure fair, competitive markets at home, secure access to new markets abroad and support businesses to invest, export and grow. Our priorities are the Industrial Strategy, the Trade Strategy the Plan for Small Businesses, and Make Work Pay.

The local DBT team operates across the North of England supporting businesses through tailored services such as International Trade Advisers, the Export Academy and strategic partnerships with

other local business support providers. We have dedicated International Trade Advisers who have a wealth of commercial experience along with sector and market knowledge, who work with businesses of all sizes to help them accelerate their international growth ambitions through impartial and tailored advice. By working with the DBT team, you will also gain access to local events, trade missions and meet-the-buyer events.

Chamber Members can now receive in-person export advice from Mike Staley (pictured), International Trade Adviser with the Department for Business and Trade.

With six years at DBT and extensive global experience with UK multinationals, Mike offers support with Export Strategies, access to Export Academy training, and tailored one-to-one guidance to help your business expand internationally. He also focuses on the Automotive and Future Mobility sectors in the region.

» Please contact Jane.Booth@sccci.co.uk for more information.

Are you a member of the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce or a company using the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce export document services?

Now is the time to celebrate your success, by entering the South Cheshire Chamber Business Awards 2025.

The judges of this category are looking for a business that:

- Can demonstrate proven success and active involvement in growing sales of their products and/or services overseas.
- Has an understanding of the countries that the business trades in as well as an awareness of competitors
- Has an awareness of, and a strategy for, managing requirements such as language, culture, marketing, commercial contracts, getting paid, logistics (for goods)
- Can evidence ongoing training and skills development and a passion to succeed overseas
- The closing date for entries is 5pm Friday 19th September.

» Go to sccci.co.uk/business-awards and complete each section of the form as fully as possible. All information submitted will be treated in strict confidence.



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Reputation Matters: Why Construction Linx offers more than just a competitive price



In a time when budgets are under pressure and businesses are looking for best value, it can be tempting to choose the lowest quote when appointing a contractor. But as many Chamber members will know — that initial saving can sometimes come at a much greater cost.

At Construction Linx, we've worked with commercial clients across Cheshire and beyond for over 20 years. From facilities maintenance to full refurbishments, we're proud to support schools, housing providers, retail units, industrial sites and office spaces.

But what sets us apart is not just what we do — it's how we do it.

Introducing Our Reputational Guarantee

We created the Construction Linx Reputational Guarantee to give our clients peace of mind. When you choose us, you're not just hiring a contractor. You're protecting your business reputation.

We've all seen the problems that can arise when the cheapest quote wins the job:

- No health and safety procedures
- Poor or unfinished workmanship
- No public liability cover
- Missed deadlines and poor communication

That's not just frustrating — it puts your name, your workplace, and your own clients at risk.

Our Reputational Guarantee is our commitment to doing things properly:

- Fully accredited and insured (CHAS, SafeContractor, Constructionline)
- Transparent communication with regular progress updates
- Trained, uniformed staff who treat every site with respect
- Consistent, high-quality workmanship — first time, every time

As a proud member of the South Cheshire Chamber, we know how much local businesses value trust, consistency and professionalism. Our reputation has been



built on those values — and we work hard every day to protect yours.

So, the next time you're choosing a contractor, ask yourself:

What's the real cost of a cheap quote — and who are you trusting with your name?

» For more information call: 01270 848700



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- Asset and property management
- Valuation



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Cheshire & Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan 2025: Progress, Priorities & The Power of Business Voice

As the Cheshire & Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) completes another year, our 2025 Progress Report showcases a region-wide effort to reshape education and training around the real needs of local business. Approved by the Secretary of State for Education in August 2023, the LSIP is a three-year initiative led by South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, designed to place businesses at the heart of the skills system.

What Is the Cheshire & Warrington LSIP?

Our LSIP focuses on five key themes: Technical Skills, Accessibility, Employability Competencies, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), and Educational Professionals, with a focus on transitioning industry professionals into teaching.

We aim to bridge the gap between business and post-16 education providers, ensuring that training provision aligns with current and future workforce demands.

Progress Highlights (July 2024 – June 2025)

- **Technical Skills:** Over 4,200 learners have accessed new facilities funded by our Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), including immersive learning environments and green technology hubs. 38 Skills Bootcamps (funded training) are planned for 2025–26.
- **Accessibility:** More than 55 employers have received support navigating training and funding, including apprenticeship levy transfers. Inclusive initiatives such as SEND-specific careers fairs and youth task forces are helping disadvantaged groups access opportunities.
- **Employability Competencies:** Programmes like “Core Skills for 2030” and mock assessment centres have reached over 930 students, embedding essential skills like communication, resilience, and digital literacy into the curriculum.
- **CEIAG:** Over 6,000 students attended careers fairs, and new work experience models are being trialled in Net Zero, Life Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing sectors.

- **Educational Professionals:** Initiatives like the Industry Associate Pilot are helping professionals transition into teaching roles, while Continued Professional Development and careers awareness training have reached over 60 educators.

What Still Needs to Be Done

Despite strong progress, several challenges remain:

- Increasing capacity within the education system to meet demand for technical course delivery.
- Improving employer understanding of training offers and funding mechanisms.
- Mapping gaps in employability skills provision and ensuring consistent reporting across partners.
- Strengthening engagement with disadvantaged groups and promoting inclusive recruitment.

We are actively working with partners to address these issues, with full delivery targeted by August 2026.

Your Voice Matters – October Relaunch

This October, we will relaunch our engagement activities - and we need your voice!

Without input from businesses, we cannot make real change. Your feedback shapes the future of training and skills provision in Cheshire & Warrington, ensuring it reflects the realities of your workforce and industry.

Whether you're facing recruitment challenges, skills shortages, or planning for future growth, your insights are vital. Join us in shaping a resilient, responsive, and inclusive skills system.

The full LSIP Progress Report is available on our website: cheshireandwarringtonlsip.co.uk

» **If your business needs help to navigate the skills system, get in touch: LSIP@sccci.co.uk**



Sarah Emes-Young
Project Manager



Julie Shawcross
Skills Consultant



Maria Davison
Skills Consultant

£37.7 billion

Total economy of Cheshire & Warrington

1 million people

live in Cheshire & Warrington

A new chapter for Stroke Survivors: Support group opens in Holmes Chapel



Liz Bedson (left) with Ward Manager Bernadette Parry (right)

After our CEO's father survived a stroke in 2016 it was evident that there was a gap and a need for stroke survivors to be supported in a way that was nurturing, empowering and have a positive input into their journey after surviving a stroke.

Stroke Survivors Speech & Language Support Group currently operate their face to face groups in Crewe, Sandbach, Alsager and Nantwich and are now coming to

support stroke survivors in Holmes Chapel in August.

A huge thank you to Care Connect and Holmes Chapel Parish Council who have donated funding towards the group for a year! We are extremely grateful for their support.

Each of our groups cost approximately £3500.00 to run each year, so this has been a huge blessing!

We are always very grateful for any donation as we are an independent Charity who receive no statutory funding.

Our CEO, Liz Bedson is delighted to be bringing another of her support groups to the people of Holmes Chapel. She said by empowering stroke survivors to recover, reclaim and rebuild their lives after stroke it builds motivation, resilience and reduces social isolation for them in a fun and positive manner. The difference it has made to the many survivors that have used and continue to use our Charity has been paramount in their own journeys of rehabilitation.

We have found some fantastic volunteers for Holmes Chapel who will be supporting and empowering our stroke survivors and everyone is welcome to come along for the opening session on Wednesday 6th August 1pm-2.30pm. And there will be cake!!!!



OUR STROKE SURVIVORS GROUP IS COMING TO
HOLMES CHAPEL

OPENING DATE - 6 AUGUST 2025

1pm to 2.30pm

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COME AND SEE HOW WE EMPOWER STROKE SURVIVORS TO
RECOVER, RECLAIM AND REBUILD THEIR LIVES AFTER STROKE.

SURVIVORS AND FAMILY/CARERS WELCOME.

CHARITY NUMBER 1009008

We are so fortunate as a Charity to have such fantastic volunteers across all of our groups who all go above and beyond to deliver our objectives.

We are also delighted to announce that we now have an information board about our Charity at Leighton Hospital, Ward 6, Stroke Ward.

Thank you to Bernadette for allowing us, this fantastic opportunity to reach more survivors and their families.

Wishes granted, lives changed: The story of The Genie's Wish charity



"Thank you so much to The Genie's Wish and all the amazing people who made this wonderful wish possible! They'll get hours of fun out of their bikes this summer, it is so lovely to see the joy on their faces. Daniel said, 'I can't believe how lucky I am!' Honestly, what an amazing wish for both. We are so, so grateful. You have brought so much joy to our family."

One way to support wishes like Charlotte and Daniel's is by joining us at The Genie's Wish Northwest Gala, taking place on Saturday 18th October at the Concorde Conference Centre, Manchester Airport.

Set beneath the iconic aircraft, the evening includes a welcome drink, three-course dinner, live music, inspiring keynote from Paralympian Mari who won a bronze medal in the 2024 in Para-dressage, silent auction and a special talk and Q&A with Mike Bannister, the former Chief Concorde Pilot.

» For tickets, scan the QR code:



The Genie's Wish is a UK charity granting life, enhancing wishes to individuals from birth to age 40 with serious or life-limiting medical conditions, and to young carers aged 5 to 18 across England and Wales.

We create moments of joy, relief, and togetherness for those facing incredibly tough circumstances.

Wishes are as unique as the people we support, from UK holidays and exciting days out to personalised experiences and learning life skills. Every wish is thoughtfully tailored and delivered with care and personalised to suit the individual.

Thirteen-year-old twins Charlotte and Daniel are one example. Charlotte lives with Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy, seizures, and visual impairment. She uses a wheelchair full-time and relies on her family for round-the-clock care. Her twin brother Daniel is a devoted young carer who supports his sister daily.

The twins wished for something simple but powerful, a specialised trike for Charlotte so she could enjoy cycling for the first time, and a mountain bike for Daniel so they could ride together, and he can also join his friends on new adventures finding some independence.

A week after receiving the bikes, their dad shared:

Walking for the Stars: A Community United in Memory and Hope



Since joining 2wish as Regional Fundraiser for Cheshire in late 2024, I've had the privilege of connecting with incredible individuals and organisations across the region. One of the most impactful steps in this journey has been becoming a member of the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, which has opened doors to meaningful partnerships and community engagement.

At the heart of 2wish is a powerful mission: to support anyone affected by the sudden or unexpected death of a child or young person. Within 24-48 hours of a referral, our team reaches out to families, offering immediate and compassionate support during the most unimaginable moments.

Since expanding into Cheshire in 2024, 2wish has been a lifeline for grieving families,

communities, and even professionals who find themselves navigating the aftermath of such loss. And now, we're inviting you to walk alongside us—literally!

This year marks a major milestone for 2wish as we launch our very first "For Our Stars" Memory Walks—a series of family-friendly, sponsored events designed to honour loved ones and raise vital funds for our work.

Our Cheshire event takes place on Saturday, 13th September 2025, in the beautiful surroundings of Marbury Park, Northwich. Open to all, this walk is more than just a fundraiser—it's a heartfelt celebration of life, remembrance, and community.

Our Event Village will welcome registered participants with t-shirts, tribute badges, and complimentary water. You'll have the chance to personalise your badge at our customisation station—think stickers,

sparkles, and heartfelt messages. Face painters will be on hand for both kids and grown-ups, and our merchandise stall will help you step out in style!

The walk begins, following a fun warm-up session to get everyone moving. Choose between a 3km or 5km route and along the way, expect surprises, activities for little ones, and moments of reflection.

As the walk concludes, we'll gather once more at the Event Village to celebrate with refreshments, collect our medals, and share in the joy of a day spent remembering, connecting, and supporting one another.

Whether you've experienced loss or simply want to stand in solidarity with those who have, we invite you to be part of this special day. Let's walk together—for love, for healing, and 'For Our Stars'.

» **To find out how you, or your business, can get involved, please contact liane.dooley@2wish.org.uk or to register visit www.2wish.org.uk/memorywalks2025**



Business and charity partnerships support the local charity sector



Cheshire Connect and Baywater Healthcare joined forces to co-host the recent South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Final Friday Networking event on 28th February 2025.

Dianne Parrish, Cheshire Connect Business Connector, and Adam Sullivan, Chief Executive at Baywater, each presented an insightful case study on how businesses, both large and small, can make a huge

impact to support local charities, via skill donorship. Adam explained how Cheshire Connect became the perfect partner to help his business achieve its CSR and ESG aims.

Dianne also highlighted the issues currently facing the charity sector. Due to the economic climate and cost of living crisis there is even more demand for services. However, the charity sector is facing huge cuts in funding and much reduced local authority commissioning. It has become

more important to help and support our local third sector, and skill donorship is an ideal option.

The South Cheshire Chamber members said:

'The Final Friday event, hosted by Baywater Healthcare and Cheshire Connect, was an excellent experience. Baywater Healthcare's facilities were impressive, and the presentations from each host were both informative and engaging for the attendees. It was truly insightful to learn about the impactful work both organisations do to support the community. Additionally, the opportunity to connect with other professionals was valuable and enriching.'

The Final Friday network sessions are held each month and have become sought after; opportunities to host need to be booked at least 12 months ahead via South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce.

» **For more information about Cheshire Connect, please contact the local Business Connector, Dianne Parrish, on 07946639394 or email: dianneparrish@cheshireconnect.org**

Get your glad rags on for Her-Place Glitter Ball



Women and girls charity Her-Place Charitable Trust has unveiled plans to mark its 10th anniversary with a glamorous evening at Nantwich Football Club.

The Wistaston-based charity which provides services across Cheshire is inviting women to get their glad rags on for its Glitter Ball on September 27th and already tickets are selling well.

Organisers say it will be an evening of food and entertainment and a chance for women of all ages to let their hair down among friends.

All proceeds will go towards the charity's work in the community and several local

businesses are supporting as sponsors including Poole Alcock, Mornflake, Nantwich Football Club and Studio One photography Nantwich. Many others have donated prizes for the draw.

Her-Place Charitable Trust founder Kate Blakemore said: "The ball will be an opportunity to connect with other local women and organisations while supporting our vital work with women and girls across the community.

"Our work spans mental health support, youth programmes, women's wellbeing services, and our baby loss support service – and events like this help us raise the essential funds needed to continue this impact. Nantwich Football Club has kindly



offered use of its function room. The theme is glitter so expect the 'wow' factor and have some fun."

The evening includes a buffet dinner, live music and disco. There will also be a short insight into the work of Her-Place Charitable Trust.

The charity, founded in 2015 as Motherwell Cheshire, rebranded in the spring to reflect its commitment to supporting all women and girls.

Tickets for Glitter Ball are £30 with all proceeds going to the charity. See Facebook or <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/glitter-ball-tickets-1300935546239?aff=ebdsoportprofile>

» **For more on Her-Place Charitable Trust and its various initiatives including counselling, free period products, infant loss support, menopause cafes, health screening and school uniform recycling at The Hub on Beech Drive go to www.her-place.co.uk**

A Community Café at the Heart of Wistaston



Located in Wistaston, Crewe, the Pantree serves its local community—and not just with delicious cakes and hearty breakfasts. It provides a place for people of all walks of life to sit and enjoy a coffee, meet with friends, or just feel comfortable in their own company in familiar surroundings.

The majority of people who visit do so regularly and have become part of the Pantree family.

Owner Amy Heinemann took over the Pantree in January 2024. A lifelong dream to own her own café, Amy had been working at the eatery for the past 6 years and snapped up the opportunity to take it on herself.

The Pantree serves breakfasts, lunches, desserts and its speciality—cakes and traybakes! Sourcing as many ingredients locally as possible, all cakes, quiches and traybakes are made freshly on site. Meat is sourced from a local butcher, with a top-quality breakfast being the Pantree's signature plate.

The Pantree sits conveniently in the corner of the Readesdale units at the top of Danebank Ave. It has disabled parking, level access to all areas as well as a fully accessible toilet. Food is available to eat in or to take away.

The Pantree plans to grow in the coming years, so look out for some new ideas that will hopefully propel this small business and secure its future so that it continues to be in the heart of the community for many years.

» **Amy, The Pantree Coffee and Tea Lounge, CW2 8UR, 01270 652300**



Celebrating 40 Years of Trusted Service: Crewe Tyre and Exhaust Ltd



12th August 2025 marks a remarkable milestone for Crewe Tyre and Exhaust as the trusted independent business celebrates its 40th anniversary. Crewe Tyres has grown to become one of South Cheshire's most reliable names in tyre and exhaust fitting, with a reputation built on integrity, quality service, and great customer care.

Founded on the principles of honesty and hard work, Crewe Tyres has always prioritised value and safety for its customers. From its humble beginnings to now offering an extensive range of tyres, from budget to premium brands, the business has

continuously adapted to meet modern motoring needs whilst maintaining a strong sense of community. As a proud sponsor of Crewe Alexandra FC, Crewe Tyres demonstrates its commitment to supporting local institutions and giving back to the area it calls home.

A fundamental part of Crewe Tyres' success is its people. At the heart of business is long-standing owner Eric Harrison, whose loyalty, expertise, and personable

service have made him a familiar and trusted face to generations of local customers. Eric's dedication is a testament to the strong team ethos that defines the business whereby staff are friends who share a commitment to great service.

Equally, loyal customers are essential to the company's legacy. Over the decades, Crewe Tyres have built lasting relationships through honest advice and a dependable service. Their customers know they can count on a straight-talking approach and expert care, which has resulted in word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat business year after year.

With a firm grip on tradition and an eye on the road ahead, Crewe Tyres enters its fifth decade not just with pride, but with renewed passion for serving the people who've made the journey possible. Here's to 40 years, and many more miles to come!

» For more information go to: crewetyres.co.uk or call: 01270 255966

Weston Centre Business Hub marks 20 year milestone



This year marks a significant milestone for Weston Centre Business Hub as it celebrates 20 years of proudly serving the business and residential community in Crewe and beyond.

From its early beginnings to its current status as a thriving, multi-use business hub, the Weston Centre has grown to become a vital part of the local economy. Over the past two decades, it has provided flexible, affordable space to thousands of businesses and residents, enabling them to launch, scale and thrive.

Whether it's entrepreneurs taking their first steps with a small office suite, ecommerce businesses needing a reliable unit for picking and packing, or households looking for secure self-storage during life's transitions, the Weston Centre has been a trusted partner every step of the way. The site now offers a wide range of solutions including modern office suites, warehouse space, trade units, workshops, and self-storage units, all tailored to meet evolving needs.

Much of the Weston Centre's success lies in its flexibility and customer-first approach. With easy terms, on-site support, and a genuine interest in helping tenants succeed,

it has become more than just a space provider—it's a launchpad for growth. Many of the businesses that started here have gone on to become major local employers and contributors to the regional economy.

Plans are now in motion to improve and expand the site, with a focus on sustainability, technology, and supporting the next generation of local business leaders.

"Celebrating 20 years is an incredible moment for us," says Katie Vost, Managing Director. "We're proud of the role we've played in so many journeys and are excited about what the future holds. The businesses and customers we've worked with over the years are the heart of what we do."

» For enquiries regarding storage units, warehousing or trade space opportunities at Weston Centre Business Hub, call 01270 250022 or email hello@westoncentre.co.uk

350 years in the making



Arthur Preston



Keith Jamieson

It's not every day that a company celebrates 350 years trading – but HJ Lea Oakes Ltd is not just any company. A truly family run business, it traces its' heritage back to 1675 when William Lea began milling oats in a small water powered mill in the village of Swettenham near Congleton. Centuries later, our business, now led by the 15th generation Lea – Edward Lea – has grown to encompass sites across Cheshire and Shropshire, as well as retail stores selling farm, smallholder, equine and pet supplies.

Much has changed over the 350 years – technological advances, farming methods and evolving market needs – but the hard work, reliability and determination to keep the business growing and succeeding for future generations are still our core, traditional values. We believe that our people, product quality, customer service and satisfaction, along with a truly pragmatic approach are the strong foundations of our long standing relationships with our customers.

Integral part of UK food security

With 5 mills and a fleet of 84 vehicles, HJ Lea Oakes serves UK dairy, beef and sheep farms across the region and into Scotland

and Wales, supplying vital animal feed that underpins the production of home grown milk, beef & lamb to the population.

Doing it sustainably

Today HJ Lea Oakes uses locally sourced feed materials where possible and manufactures with renewably sourced energy. Two-thirds of all ingredients are sourced from the UK, with a large proportion of these being co-products of primary human food production in the UK, so ensuring valuable nutrients not suitable for human consumption, but fit for use for feeding animals are not thrown away.

People at the heart of our business

We are proud of this milestone not only as the success of our business, but also as a celebration of our people who have made this all possible. We are extremely proud to have created a strong culture and a happy working environment – and we are rewarded by having some amazing long serving employees to celebrate, over 20 of whom have been with us for 30+ years. This includes Arthur Preston, who joined HJ Lea Oakes at 16 years old, served as a Managing Director before moving to a role of Vice Chairman and is still a vital part of the company 69 years later. Mr Preston said: "It has been an incredible journey to be part of all these years". David Fox (Sales) has

reached 57 years of service, Bud Rafferty (Bulk Driver) – 46 years, Steve Wiggins (Aston Mill) – 43 years, Keith Jamieson (Technical) and Steve Young (Bulk Driver) – 41 years and Alan Brick (Sales) and Rob Lea (Congleton Mill) are celebrating 40 years this year.

Developing the next generation

As important as celebrating our long-term employees, HJ Lea Oakes commits each year to developing the next generation. Close links to local universities and colleges ensure an ongoing influx of new graduates and apprentices. At the latest count, we have a total of 13 recent graduates and apprentices developing their careers in the agricultural sector with us.

Celebrating together

In May HJ Lea Oakes and our sister company, Mornflake, celebrated the anniversary with a giant event "Picnic on the Pitch" held at Crewe Alexandra Football pitch. More than 800 members of staff and their families were treated to a day of music, entertainment and food. We also held a friendly football game between HJ Lea Oakes and Mornflake employees, with our trademark green, yellow and white colours represented in our kit and orange and black for the Mornflake players.

As part of the 350th anniversary the two businesses joined forces to plant 350 trees at selected sites, with employees also being given a sapling each.

James Lea said: "Our heritage is important, but equally so is the loyalty of our employees, and we wanted to make it a special day for them. Family values are at the heart of what we do and their welfare is key. We're proud so many local people have chosen to spend their whole working lives with us and our reputation as an employer on both sides of the family business is an enviable one."

» For more on HJ Lea Oakes heritage, products and locations go to hilea.com



The importance of offering Counselling Sessions to employees



In today's work environment, maintaining your employees' mental health is more crucial than ever. Employers have a unique opportunity to support their employees' well-being by offering counselling sessions. This proactive approach not only fosters a healthier workplace but also enhances productivity and retention.

Mental health issues can significantly impact an employee's performance and overall job

satisfaction. Stress, anxiety, grief, trauma and depression are common challenges that many face, often leading to absenteeism and decreased productivity. By providing access to professional counselling, employers can help employees manage these issues effectively.

Counselling sessions offer a safe space for employees to discuss their concerns and develop coping strategies. This support can lead to improved mental health, increased resilience, and a more positive outlook on work and life. Employees who feel supported are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and loyal to their organization.

Investing in employees' mental health can yield significant returns for businesses. Reduced absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and enhanced employee performance are just a few of the benefits. It also demonstrates

a company's commitment to its workforce, which can enhance its reputation and attract the best people.

Jo Thacker Counselling offers bespoke packages that employers can purchase up front and give to their employees to use as and when they need to. Confidentiality to the employee is guaranteed and no details are passed onto employer departments.

» Want to know more, give Jo a call on 07732775387 or visit this website www.jothackercounselling.com





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Founded in 2024, A500 Tech Solutions is a dynamic and customer-centric IT services provider, established by CEO Simon, a seasoned professional with over four decades of experience in the technology and financial sectors. Simon began his journey in the IT industry in 2002, shortly after completing university, by launching his first company. After a successful 10-year run, he transitioned into a rewarding career in the emergency services, followed by several years in the financial markets, further deepening his knowledge of IT infrastructure, security, and regulatory requirements in the financial sector.

After a brief early retirement — which lasted just two days — Simon found himself eager for a new challenge. Within 24 hours, A500 Tech Solutions was born. Since then, the company has grown rapidly, earning a reputation for reliability, technical excellence, and a refreshingly personal approach to IT support.

Based in Cheshire, Operating Nationwide

Our head office and secure Network Operations Centre (NOC) are located in Cheshire and are monitored 24/7. A500 Tech Solutions is proudly family-run and built on strong values, with a focus on trust, transparency, and long-term client relationships. Whether you're a sole trader or a multinational corporation, we offer scalable managed services, IT support, and compliance consultancy tailored to your unique needs.

Our Philosophy: Clients Come First

With more than 60 years of combined industry experience, our team is committed to supporting our clients at every stage of their business journey. At A500 Tech Solutions,

we believe in demystifying technology. That means speaking in plain language, offering practical advice, and delivering solutions that make a real difference — without overwhelming our clients with unnecessary technical jargon.

Cutting-Edge Technologies, Tailored Solutions

We leverage the latest advancements in cloud computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and next-generation software to deliver forward-thinking IT solutions. Our team of Microsoft-accredited professionals is equipped to support a wide spectrum of technologies, whether you're a startup, small business, medium-sized enterprise, or part of the public sector or financial services industry.

Our Services

Here's a snapshot of the services we offer across different business sizes and sectors:

Startups

We help you lay a solid IT foundation:

- Cybersecurity and ongoing support
- VoIP phone systems
- Office network design and installation
- GDPR compliance and data protection

Small Businesses

Grow with confidence knowing your IT is in good hands:

- Cybersecurity and IT support
- Phone system setup and management
- Microsoft 365 integration and licensing
- Data backups and business continuity
- GDPR assessments
- Scalable office networks

Medium-Sized Businesses

Optimise your infrastructure for growth and resilience:

- Proactive remote support
- Cloud-based and local backup solutions
- Business continuity planning
- Virtualisation and infrastructure upgrades
- Security monitoring and compliance
- Microsoft 365 and secure VPN setups
- Cybersecurity and endpoint protection

Corporate, Public Sector & Financial Services

Bespoke enterprise-level support to meet complex demands:

- Industry-specific IT strategy and support
- Regulatory compliance for finance and public service
- Scalable, secure systems designed for high performance

Partner With Us

If you have an existing client base and are looking to expand your service offerings, we offer white-labelled solutions. You focus on the sales and customer relationships — we provide the technical expertise and service delivery. It's a partnership that allows both parties to grow.

Why Choose A500 Tech Solutions?

- 24/7 UK-based support from experienced professionals
- Microsoft-certified engineers and consultants
- Family-run business with a personal, responsive approach
- Transparent pricing and no hidden fees
- Tailored solutions — no "one size fits all" packages

We never say no to a challenge. If you have an IT need, we'll find a way to meet it.

» Let's Talk

To learn more about how A500 Tech Solutions can support your business, contact us today:

Email: sales@a500.co.uk

Phone: 01270 882525

Our team is ready to listen, advise, and deliver.



Accountancy firm Banks Sheridan is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2025



Marking this milestone, the company is putting its staff, clients and community at the forefront of its plans.

Beginning their journey in August 2005, Stuart Banks, Darren Walley and David Morris opened the office doors in Nantwich and three years later relocated their expanding team to the existing offices, based in Crewe. In 2017, following a merger, Paul Sammons became the company's fourth director.

The business has had fantastic success over the years, seeing the client services in accountancy, audit and taxation expand, introducing payroll and, recently, financial services through its associate company, Banks Sheridan Wealth.

Director Paul Sammons explains:

"We have a fantastic relationship with our clients built on our mission of Value, Partnership, Innovation and Care Every Day. Providing the best possible service to them is at the heart of our principles."

David Morris, the Operations Director, added:

"We have grown our team over the last 20 years, and now have 26 members of staff across the group. Without them we could not have realised our successes and overcome the challenges. The regular great client feedback we receive about them truly reflects their value to the business."

Several events have been planned throughout the year to mark the occasion. The Wishing Well, a fantastic Crewe-based charity, has been chosen by the Banks Sheridan team as its designated 2025 charity of the year, and

a target has been set to raise £2,000. This is hoped to be achieved by various means, including a sponsored 20km walk, bake-offs, prize raffles and David has even committed to 'virtually' climbing the stairs of each of the world's 20 tallest buildings (totalling 2,142 floors).

The Banks Sheridan team will be celebrating in style, and tickets have been bought for a day at the races in Chester. Clients will also have an opportunity to meet the team at an event being hosted at Crewe Hall.

Director Stuart Banks said,

"It is important that our clients are involved as they are pivotal in our achievements; we truly want to show our appreciation."

Darren Walley, Managing Director, added:

"I am proud of all that Banks Sheridan has accomplished. I find it a good time to not only reflect on the past, but to plan for the future and look forward to our next 20 years of success."

The Banks Sheridan Group are based on Crewe Business Park, providing accountancy, audit, payroll and financial services advice throughout South Cheshire and the surrounding area.

» **Visit: banks-sheridan.co.uk for more information or call: 01270 530970**



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HOW UK BUSINESS OWNERS CAN MAXIMISE VALUE WHEN PLANNING THEIR EXIT STRATEGY

Every successful business owner eventually faces a critical decision: how to exit while maximising value and ensuring continuity. While each exit journey is unique, the key challenge remains consistent - balancing financial returns with your business legacy. Understanding your options is the first step toward making an informed decision that aligns with your circumstances and aspirations.

Four Key Exit Routes

The following explores four potential exit strategies, each offering distinct advantages and considerations:

Sale to a Strategic Trade Purchaser

A trade sale involves selling to another company, often a competitor or business in a related sector seeking to expand their operations, customer base, or geographic reach. This remains the most common exit route for many business owners.

Typically, 100% of shares are sold on completion with the majority of the purchase price paid immediately. However, sellers usually remain for a transitional period of around two years, with the residual purchase price paid over this period, often linked to achieving financial targets through an "earn out" arrangement.

This route is best suited for business owners who want to maximise immediate value, prefer a clean break, and would benefit from integration with larger organisations.

Management Buy-Out (MBO)

A management buy-out involves selling to your existing management team. This option appeals to owners wanting to preserve company culture and maintain relationships with key employees, while the management team's operational knowledge reduces transition risks.

The existing management team purchases the business, typically requiring a combination of existing cash, management investment, debt funding and deferred consideration.

However, not all businesses have management teams with the drive, risk appetite, and skillset to transition from employee to business owner. Funding can



be complex, and negotiating with long-term colleagues can strain relationships if not handled carefully.

This option works best for business owners who prioritise business continuity, want to reward loyal management, and accept extended payment terms or ongoing involvement.

Sale to Private Equity

Selling a stake to private equity investors allows business owners to de-risk while maintaining involvement. This provides a capital event while retaining upside potential through rolled-over equity.

Private equity firms invest in businesses, typically taking a controlling stake while allowing owners to retain equity and continue in leadership roles to drive growth over a 3-5 year period.

Private equity partnerships often come with performance pressure and reporting requirements that can feel restrictive. Cultural fit between business values and the private equity firm's approach is crucial.

This route suits ambitious owners wanting to realise value today while accelerating growth plans over 3-5 years.

Employee Ownership Trusts (EOTs)

UK business owners can sell to an EOT and pay 0% Capital Gains Tax while receiving full market value. EOTs represent an increasingly popular exit strategy, transferring ownership to employees while providing significant tax advantages and creating sustainable succession plans.

The business is sold to a trust that holds it on behalf of all employees, who benefit from the company's success through profit-sharing and having a voice in major decisions.

EOT structures require specialised legal and tax advice, making them more expensive to establish. Employees may lack business

acumen for strategic decision-making, potentially requiring ongoing management support. However, the significant tax advantages make EOTs a highly attractive option financially.

This option works best for businesses with strong employee cultures, owners prioritising social impact alongside returns, and companies with stable cash flows.

Making the Right Choice

Selecting the optimal exit strategy requires careful consideration of key factors. Timeline is crucial – how quickly does an owner need to exit? Financial objectives matter – do they prioritise immediate value or long-term returns? Consideration of desired involvement level – do they want a clean break or continued involvement? Tax implications can significantly impact overall returns, and legacy considerations around what matters most for employees and customers should also influence decisions.

The best exit strategy balances these financial needs, personal goals, and business circumstances. Every business represents years of dedication, and choosing the right exit strategy ensures that legacy continues while providing the financial security business owners deserve.

The Importance of Early Planning

Successful exit planning requires early preparation, beginning several years before an intended exit. This allows time to optimise value, address structural issues, and explore all available options thoroughly.

DJH's specialists across Tax Planning, Corporate Finance and Commercial Funding teams can guide business owners through successful exits across all strategies, managing the full process from valuation through to completion. The firm's experience across multiple exit routes ensures business owners receive tailored advice that maximises value while achieving their personal and business objectives.

» Business owners considering their exit strategy are encouraged to contact DJH's specialist team to discuss their options and plan their optimal exit route. Please get in touch by emailing Sarah Glass at sarah.glass@djh.co.uk or by calling 01270 624445.



Expert Eye with...



BRITAIN AT WORK REPORT REVEALS HOW NHS DELAYS ARE STRAINING BOTH BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYEES

At Health Shield, we've always been driven by a simple goal—to support people in living healthy, happy lives. It's this commitment that inspired our latest Britain At Work Report. Through this survey, we shed light on a challenge that's affecting not only individuals but also workplaces across South Cheshire and beyond. The findings reveal the growing strain caused by delays in accessing NHS treatment and how this is impacting employees and businesses alike.

Delays Putting Pressure on Employees

Our survey highlights the extent to which NHS access issues are affecting workers' lives. A concerning 81% of employees reported feeling worried about the pressure on the NHS. These fears are not unfounded; with stretched resources, 62% of respondents admitted they'd found it difficult to book a GP appointment.

These delays aren't just frustrating. They often mean employees are left managing untreated health conditions, which can escalate into more serious issues. Women and younger workers, in particular, seem to be hit hardest by these challenges, experiencing greater difficulty accessing timely care. For businesses, this results in rising absenteeism and a workforce struggling to stay healthy and focused.

The Impact on Local Businesses

According to our findings, health-related issues, including physical injuries and mental health challenges like stress and anxiety, led to an average of seven sick days per employee last year. While some absences are unavoidable, delays in care mean small, manageable health issues are often allowed to worsen, resulting in longer periods away from work.

This is particularly concerning for businesses in regions like South Cheshire, where operational efficiency and team morale are vital. When employees are unwell and unable to access care swiftly, not only do they suffer, but the organisation feels the strain too. A lack of access to healthcare exacerbates stress, creates dissatisfaction, and impacts productivity.

A Role for Employers

While the pressures on the healthcare system are undeniable, there's an opportunity for businesses to step up and make a difference. We believe that businesses have the power to address these challenges by providing employees with practical, accessible healthcare options.

Our CEO, Jacqui Carr, captured the essence of this opportunity, saying, "Accessing timely and affordable healthcare has become a real challenge for so many, and I see the impact it has on both employees and employers. Employers have a unique opportunity to make a meaningful difference. When we support our people, we're investing in their health and the future of our organisations."

Providing tailored workplace health benefits is one way employers can offer much-needed support. Health cash plans, for instance, make it easier for employees to budget for everyday healthcare expenses, from dental check-ups to physiotherapy. At the same time, digital GP services ensure that employees can get the care they need quickly, without facing the delays often associated with traditional routes.

Investing in a People-Centred Culture

The survey findings also reinforce the importance of creating a workplace culture where wellbeing is prioritised. Many employees still feel nervous about discussing mental health challenges with their managers, despite the growing impact of stress and anxiety. To address this, organisations need to foster open communication while reducing the stigma around talking about health.

At Health Shield, we encourage businesses to consider wellbeing as a central pillar of their workplace strategy, not a mere afterthought. From subsidised healthcare to mental health resources, investing in these initiatives signals that employees are valued, which in turn builds a stronger, more motivated workforce.

A Collaborative Approach for Change

For businesses across South Cheshire, the takeaway is clear. While the NHS remains a vital service, its current pressures are creating gaps that can't be ignored. Employers who take proactive steps to bridge this divide

are not only helping their teams but also safeguarding the long-term success of their organisations.



By investing in accessible health benefits, improving workplace cultures, and providing employees with the tools to manage their health effectively, businesses can create environments where people thrive.

Discover More

The findings from the Britain At Work Report are a call to action—but also an opportunity. Together, we can rise to the challenge and create healthier, stronger workplaces. Supporting businesses and employees isn't just part of what we do at Health Shield—it's at the heart of everything we stand for. Together, we can make a meaningful difference.

To explore these insights further and access practical advice for supporting your teams, download the full white paper at https://info.healthshield.co.uk/britain_at_work_access_to_healthcare_report

» For more information call: 01270 588555

BRITAIN AT WORK REPORT 2025

How healthcare access delays are affecting workplace wellbeing



Expert Eye with...



HOW HYBRID TRAINING IS TRANSFORMING THE GYM EXPERIENCE

With over 25 years in the fitness industry, on both the operator and supplier sides, I've had a front-row seat to the evolution of gym environments, trends, and member expectations. Today, managing the fitness products and services at Everybody Health and Leisure, I'm more excited than ever about where our industry is heading—particularly the rise of hybrid training and how it's reshaping both space and strategy.

There was a time when fitness facilities were dominated by endless rows of treadmills, steppers, and cross trainers, with only a small area reserved for free weights or functional training. That model no longer reflects what today's fitness enthusiasts are looking for.

We are now seeing gym floors being revolutionised, with larger, more versatile functional training zones taking centre stage. These spaces are dynamic and diverse, equipped with tools like kettlebells, sled tracks, TRX, ski ergs, boxing bags, assault bikes, rowers etc. They are designed to offer a more engaging, performance-focused experience that supports strength, mobility, and 'real-world movements'.

Hybrid training, blending resistance and cardiovascular training in one cohesive programme, isn't just a trend. It's fast becoming a cornerstone of modern fitness for several reasons:

- **Efficiency:** For individuals with busy lives, combining cardio and strength in one session offers a full-body workout in less time.
- **Balanced Results:** It prevents the imbalances that can occur when focusing too heavily on one training style or movement.
- **Functional Movement:** This style supports daily movement patterns, walking, lifting, bending, carrying, making it incredibly relevant.
- **Mental Stimulation:** The variety it offers keeps members mentally engaged and motivated, reducing burden and potential burnout.
- **Inclusivity:** These spaces allow for endless training variations, making them

adaptable for all levels and goals, not just one style of gym-goer.

- **Community:** Uniting people creates powerful benefits that boost both motivation and overall well-being. When individuals feel a sense of belonging, they're more likely to stay consistent, push themselves further, and find greater enjoyment in the experience, ultimately fostering loyalty and improving retention to the operator.

At Everybody Health and Leisure, we've embraced this shift by developing dedicated functional zones across our centres. These areas aren't just for open use to all our members on their schedule, they're also where we deliver our coach-led TRAIN classes, which are free to all members and designed around the core pillars of strength, cardio, and functional fitness.

To elevate this even further, we're launching our first mass participation fitness event—the TRAIN Games—on 11th October at Macclesfield Leisure Centre. This event has been designed to be inclusive, accessible, where people can really get competitive entering as a single or as a pair, thus giving the member the opportunity to buddy up, share the workload, and test their fitness in a more fun, motivating format.

This is more than just a one-off event. TRAIN Games is the start of a series. We want our members to use TRAIN classes not just to get stronger, but to train with a purpose—to get race-ready, track their progress, and aim to beat their previous performance each time. It's all about creating a cycle of motivation, progress, and retention.

The main event is also open to non-members; our consistent aim is to provide more opportunities for our community to get active and enjoy the benefits of exercise.

As models like Hyrox and CrossFit continue to gain traction, traditional gyms must adapt to meet evolving expectations. That doesn't mean abandoning what's worked in the past, but it does mean innovating boldly, rethinking gym layouts, investing in coach-led hybrid sessions, and creating community-driven experiences that foster both progress and a sense of belonging.

The many years of group exercise, bringing people together within studio spaces in

leisure facilities proves this works! The facilities that embrace the hybrid training approach creatively and strategically are the ones that will thrive in the years to come.

» For more information call: 01477 689557



Ruth Lynch



Community in Action: Fundraising for The Wingate Centre

We're proud to share that the team at Atherton & Associates Wealth Management recently completed a 34 mile walk over 13 hours along the Sandstone Trail to raise funds for two charitable causes.

It was definitely worth the early start and sore feet as the challenge raised an incredible total of £2,440. The total will be split equally between local charity, The Wingate Centre and the St. James's Place Charitable Foundation, helping both organisations continue their vital work supporting children and young people with additional needs.

A heartfelt thank you to all members who supported and donated.



Synergy Recruitment's Charity Sports Day raises £3,400 for My Cheshire Without Abuse

In a heartfelt show of community spirit, local businesses came together to raise £3,402.11 for My Cheshire Without Abuse (MyCWA), a charity that supports individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.



Over the past 30 years, RASASC Cheshire & Merseyside has been supporting survivors of sexual abuse, including women, men, and children.

Can you help us raise much needed funds to support survivors?

We provide the following essential services for survivors:

- Specialist Counselling
- ISVA and CHISVA advocacy
- Children and young people's support
- Wellbeing and information services

We have nine centres located within communities across Cheshire:

Chester, Crewe, Ellesmere Port, Knowsley, Halton, Northwich, Macclesfield, St. Helens and Warrington.

Our core ethos is to ensure we provide free community-based support tailored towards the needs of people affected by sexual violence.

If you're an individual or a Business wanting to make a difference, call 07391429480 or email pushpi@rapecentre.org.uk

If you need support: 0330 363 0063

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The Next Gen Network boosted my confidence and provided me with **new skills and insights** that you wouldn't typically get from university or early job experiences.

I felt comfortable and supported throughout the sessions, and **I highly recommend it** to anyone looking to build their confidence.

Emily Ellis

Reaseheath College



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