

Charity founder's joy at generous donation

by **Andy Morris**
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A GRATEFUL Rugby mum who was inspired to help others after a family tragedy has thanked Rainsbrook Crematorium for donating £10,000 to her charity.

The crematorium has given the money to Freddie's Wish, a bereavement support charity founded by Charlotte Jolliffe in the name of her 13-month-old son after he died in a car crash in 2014.

Charlotte set up the charity to help bereaved parents after she was unable to find specialist support in the weeks after Freddie's accident.

Since its launch, Freddie's Wish has raised more than £320,000 to help deliver bereavement support to parents who have lost a child, and paediatric first aid courses to people who care for children.

The crematorium's donation comes from the proceeds of recycling metal and orthopaedic implants following cremation.

Charlotte said: "We are blown away by the generosity of the donation from Rainsbrook Crematorium and we want to thank them and all the wonderful families that have supported the recycling scheme to enable this donation to be possible.

"This donation will make a huge



difference to a small charity like ours by enabling us to continue providing invaluable counselling support to parents who have lost a baby or child and helping them to

navigate their life after loss."

Rainsbrook joined the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's national Recycling of Materials scheme when the cre-

matorium opened 11 years ago.

Rainsbrook asks all bereaved families to consider donating the metal to the scheme - but only sends it for recycling with the bless-

Left to right - Rainsbrook Crematorium's Edward Benyon, Freddie's Wish founder Charlotte Jolliffe, Rugby Mayor Barbara Brown, Coun Andrew Last of WNC, Freddie's Wish volunteer Beth Grieves, and Lorraine Marley, Rugby Borough Council's bereavement services manager.

ing of the next of kin.

Rugby Mayor Barbara Brown joined Coun Andrew Last, West Northamptonshire Council cabinet member for HR, corporate and regulatory services, at the cheque presentation.

Coun Brown said: "The crematorium can only recycle the metal and orthopaedic implants thanks to the kindness of the next of kin, so I hope the bereaved relatives can take a degree of comfort from the fact the money raised has gone to such a wonderful charity as Freddie's Wish."

Rainsbrook Crematorium was built by Rugby Borough Council and the then Daventry District Council, and opened in the spring of 2014.

Daventry District Council became part of the new West Northamptonshire Council when it was formed in 2021.

Coun Last said: "I am proud that Rainsbrook Crematorium continues to support charities that make a real difference locally.

"Freddie's Wish provides invaluable help to families during the most difficult times, and this donation reflects our commitment to giving back to the community."

Visit www.freddieswish.org for more information about Freddie's Wish.

Visit www.rainsbrookcrematorium.co.uk for more information on Rainsbrook Crematorium.



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LEFT: Rick Cressman runs the charity auction. MIDDLE: Sue Cressman and Cath Freshwater - winner of the diamond pendant. RIGHT: Getting into the festive spirit.



Dan and Charlotte Cooper at The Snow Ball with Father Christmas and Elf on the Shelf.

SACKFULS of presents and more than \$5,000 was raised for charity at the annual Snow Ball in Balsall Common.

The annual event, hosted at Nailcote Hall Hotel Golf and Country Club saw 220 guests come together to help boost coffers at the Salvation Army to help disadvantaged children in the area on Christmas Day.

Hotelier Sue Cressman said: "The Snow Ball starts all of our Christmas Party Nights at Nailcote Hall. We have produced this event for 20 years and it goes from strength to strength. We are grateful to our sponsors Bidfood Food Service who, without their kind donation, we would not be able to present the top class entertainment we have each year."

"This year there was a bumper amount of toys and gifts donated with a room filled with presents. I am so very grateful to all that attended this very special event."

Helping to create the event's festive atmosphere were The Salvation Army Band plus 'special' guests, Santa - ably assisted by Mrs Claus, Fairies, and The Elf on the Shelf. A festive three-course meal was followed by performance courtesy of Britain's Got Talent finalist Pippa Langhorne and the night ended with an auction, raffle and dancing to The Soundations, before Nailcote Hall's resident DJ Franco wrapped up the evening's entertainment.



The Salvation Army band entertain the crowds.



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	Adult	Child
December		
20th Black Country Museum	£35.00	£22.00
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January		
17th Pub Lunch	£30.00	£24.00
21st Telford	£25.00	£20.00
March		
3rd Melton Mowbray	£29.00	£22.00
7th York	£27.00	£22.00
17th Cotswold Market & Broadway	£27.00	£22.00
21st Afternoon Tea & Litchfield	£33.00	£28.00
31st Liverpool	£29.00	£22.00
April		
8th Cheddar Gorge & Clarkes Shopping Village	£30.00	£24.00
11th London	£30.00	£24.00
14th Cotswolds & Broadway	£29.00	£24.00
May		
5th Pub Lunch	£31.00	£25.00
16th Black Country Museum	£27.00	£24.00
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Scotland- Waverley Castle Hotel 27th-31st May 26. 5 Days/ 4 Nights 425 Per Person		
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Christmas really does bring a new strength to the community in our town centres, it shows us that our centres are about people, not just retail.

We see this in all the rituals of the festive period, seeing familiar faces behind the counters, listening to school choirs, admiring the sparkle in the Christmas windows, it's all a feeling we simply can't replicate with online shopping.

We must also remember that our town centres provide warmth in non-financial ways at Christmas, providing belonging, routine and visibility for those who may feel isolated or forgotten at this emotional time of year.

Our cafes, libraries, markets, and shopping centres become a thriving centre, no invitation required-this space belongs to us all, it's our own shared living room with added sparkle.

So, make a date to visit Solihull, smile and be kind to all you meet over this last week of festive gathering, a living town centre needs people as much as profit.



Melanie Palmer
Chief Executive, Solihull BID



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Fun for all as playground gets a major upgrade



Rugby Mayor Barbara Brown tries the new equipment with pupils from Clifton Upon Dunsmore Primary School. Picture by Marcus Mingins 5025003MMR1

SWINGS and roundabouts – a playground in Rugby has been given an £87,000 upgrade.

The play area at Clifton upon Dunsmore recreation ground has been given a makeover following a consultation with the local community.

Residents told Clifton Parish Council that play equipment was out-of-date and didn't provide for children from 7-15 years, and that the skateboard park was not being used.

New equipment – made from 95 per cent recycled material – has been installed, including a spire net, a zig-zag wall, a zip-wire, a turbo carousel, a trio climbing frame and junior goal posts.

The existing metal trim trail, shelter and swings have been refurbished, a new bonded safety surface and pathways have been laid, and the unused skate ramps and bars have been removed.

Funding for the project was split between the council and a grant from the SUEZ Communities Fund.

The new playground was officially opened by Mayor Barbara Brown, prompting pupils from Clifton Upon Dunsmore Primary School to try out the new equipment soon afterwards.

Clifton Parish Council chairman Andy Moore said it was a project two years in the making.

He said: "It quickly became apparent that the existing equipment was ideal for younger children but that there was no real opportunity for play for older age groups.

"However, the massive thing was how to pay for it – at over £80,000, it was something we couldn't justify the full cost for, so to find a benefactor to grant cover half the cost was a major win. The very Generous SUEZ Community Fund England grant has done just that for our community, and we are incredibly grateful for their contribution.

"Seeing the reaction of the children when they started to play, with their enthusiasm and excitement for all the new apparatus, made all the hard work so worthwhile."



LEFT: At full stretch. Picture by Marcus Mingins 5025003MMR2 ABOVE: Trying out the new climbing wall. Picture by Marcus Mingins 5025003MMR4

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Josephine Rugg

Volunteers sought to join project

VOLUNTEERS are needed to sign up to The Friendship Project in Warwickshire.

The charity matches children and young people, in need for a variety of reasons, with volunteers, for friendship and fun.

The child may be caring for a sick parent or be limited to where they can go on holiday because of a disabled sibling or other family member. For some children, even playing in the park or going to the cinema are a rare treat.

Having some time out from often difficult home situations helps improve a child's self-esteem and self-worth.

Volunteers report they too enjoy spending time with their younger friend knowing that they are really making a difference to a child's life.

Volunteer Chris decided to sign up as a friend to a child due to the difficult circumstances he himself grew up in.

He said: "I focused on being a friend and not a parent, but I would often steer our conversations towards what type of person he wanted to be and whether he had been heading towards or away from being that person in the past week.

"In his early teenage years, he

would often skulk out of his home with his hood pulled over his face and grunt at my questions as we drove to our activity that week. But by the time we arrived at our destination and as we unloaded bikes from the car or set off on our walk he would open up, and our conversations would often be quite serious about his feelings, how he should react in some of the different situations that he was encountering.

"I always enjoyed our conversations, although I often felt that he did not listen or rejected some of what I suggested. But then I would hear my words repeated back to me, often weeks later, or he would describe to me how he had changed his behaviour or tried something that I had suggested instead of just 'thumping someone'.

"Friendships have to finish on the younger friends 17th birthday. I always expected it to finish earlier than that - hanging around with a 60 year-old man is not very cool for a teenage boy. Our friendship just seemed to get stronger and stronger and I will keep in contact with him."

Call 07516 527714 or visit friendshipproject.co.uk/ to find out more.



Christmas treecycling volunteers are hoping for another bumper year.

A CHARITY Christmas tree collection service in Warwickshire is hoping for yet another bumper year.

The annual collection of real Christmas trees is organised by Pass The Smile alongside The Myton Hospices. In return for a donation, volunteers will collect and recycle real trees. The 2026 collection will take place over the weekend of Friday to Sunday January 9 to 11.

Every tree collected is responsibly recycled, helping to reduce waste and protect the environ-

ment, while also raising vital funds to support patients and families across Myton's hospices and within the wider community. Donations additionally contribute to funding research into childhood cancer.

Since 2019, the initiative has collected 14,190 Christmas trees, raising an impressive £211,500. This year, the hospice aims to collect and recycle 4,000 real Christmas trees, expanding its coverage to all CV postcodes. Each tree will be recycled into compost or biomass, offering a convenient, eco-friendly way to dispose of Christmas trees




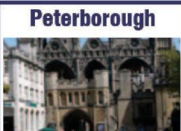


while giving back to local causes. Myton spokesperson Clare Cropp said: "The support we receive for our Christmas Tree Collection is truly amazing. Every tree collected not only helps the environment but also makes a real difference to the lives of patients and families in our hospices and to children across the UK. This year, we want to build on that incredible support so even more people can benefit from the work of The Myton Hospices and Pass The Smile."

Visit just-helping.org.uk/register-tree to book a collection.

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New year will see city airport close as new technical hub takes shape



by **Andy Morris**
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COVENTRY Airport will close in 2026 to make way for a proposed battery manufacturing and technology hub.

Operators The Rigby Group announced the site in Baginton would close in June to allow the next phase of work on Greenpower Park, part of the planned Coventry and Warwick Gigapark.

Tenants at the site have received a letter telling them they will have to leave by May 9.

A \$23million funding package to support the first phase of development for Greenpower Park – the installation of a dedicated energy

supply capable of supporting large-scale battery production – was announced by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in January.

The Rigby Group said the closure of Coventry Airport would allow the next phase of infrastructure work for the site to go ahead.

A revised planning application for Greenpower Park was also approved recently.

The plans to build an access road, begin demolition and construct a 30-megawatt electrical substation were given the green light by Warwick District Council, which has jurisdiction over the site as it sits just outside the Coventry city boundary.

Planning consent for the gigafac-

tory was due to expire last March, due to difficulties in securing an investor.

Greenpower Park is billed as a 'centre of excellence for electrification, battery technology and manufacturing'.

The location will be the first of its kind, aiming to provide a solution for battery research, industrialisation, manufacturing, testing, recycling and electrified logistics designed to foster the UK's growing battery ecosystem.

The wider Gigapark project is being brought forward through a partnership between Coventry City Council, Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council.

Greenpower Park, its main anchor site, is being delivered through a

Joint Venture between Coventry City Council and Coventry Airport Ltd.

Fully developed, the Gigapark could create up to 6,000 jobs in battery manufacturing and in the EV supply chain.

It is one of three key sites – alongside the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor and Birmingham Knowledge Quarter – that will power the West Midlands Investment Zone.

Coun Jim O'Boyle, Coventry City Council's spokesperson for jobs, regeneration and climate change, said Greenpower Park had an important role to play in accelerating the UK's transition to an electrified economy.

He said: "Greenpower Park will

act as a catalyst for a fully integrated and globally competitive battery ecosystem at the heart of the United Kingdom.

"It also forms a key part of our ambitious plans to turn Coventry into an Electric City, alongside projects such as Coventry Very Light Rail and our Strategic Energy Partnership with E.ON."

West Midlands Mayor Richard Parker said: "The Gigapark is going to make the West Midlands a global hub for cutting-edge battery technology, paving the way for a new era of electric vehicle manufacturing in and around our region."

Passenger flights from Coventry Airport ended in 2008, but it is still used for business and freight flights.

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Warning after nearly 25pc fail drink-drive test

MOTORISTS in Coventry are being urged to take extra care during the festive period after new data revealed nearly a quarter failed the drink-drive test last December.

Figures obtained by personal breathalyser firm AlcoSense show that West Midlands Police carried out 666 roadside breath tests in December 2024.

Of those stopped, nearly a quarter – 156 drivers – were found to be over the legal limit, the fourth highest rate in England and Wales.

Hunter Abbott, managing director of AlcoSense Laboratories, said:

“December is always the peak month for roadside checks due to office parties, nights out and an overall rise in social drinking.

“Police know this, which is why roadside testing surges at this time of year.”

The risk of being involved in a fatal collision is around 13 times higher at the current drink-drive limit than when sober.

Mr Abbott added: “People often underestimate how long alcohol stays in the body.

“For example, drinking four pints of medium-strong beer or four large glasses of wine in an evening can take up to 14 hours to fully clear.

“Many motorists are caught out the following morning without realising they’re still over the limit. Using a personal breathalyser before driving can give reassurance that you’re safe and legal.”

Across the whole of last year West Midlands Police

administered 6,823 breath tests, with 1,722 proving positive – an overall failure rate of just over a quarter.

The latest Department for Transport figures show 260 people were killed in drink-drive crashes across Britain – higher than a decade ago. Drunk driving has a role to play in 16 per cent of all road fatalities.

A total of 6,310 people were injured in collisions involving a driver over the limit.

Anyone caught driving over the legal alcohol limit in the UK could face a minimum 12 month driving ban, an unlimited fine and up to six months in prison.

Causing death by careless driving while over the limit carries a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison.

A drink-drive conviction also results in a criminal record, significantly higher insurance premiums and potential restrictions on employment and international travel.



Pupils from Keresley Grange Primary Academy with their new high visibility jackets.

Hi-vis jackets help pupils stand out

BRIGHT pupils at a Coventry primary school are glowing, thanks to a donation during Road Safety Week.

Keresley Grange Primary Academy has received a donation of 50 high visibility jackets from housebuilder Taylor Wimpey, to keep pupils safe and visible during the dark mornings and evenings.

Headteacher John

Astley said: “Road Safety Week is an incredibly important initiative, and we deeply appreciate Taylor Wimpey’s kind donation.

“Walking helps our students arrive happy and ready to learn, but the real impact of this support is the improved safety it brings to their journey to and from school, which is, without question, the most

crucial element.”

Helen Chard, sales and marketing director at Taylor Wimpey North Midlands, said: “Our goal is to inspire children and their families to safely walk to school more often.

“By donating high-visibility jackets, we are helping ensure their safety and giving them reassurance while travelling.”

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Seed relay project set to grow into something very special

'GOLDEN carrots' are being grown by community gardeners in Rugby who have taken part in a countrywide 'seed relay'.

Precious Egmont Gold carrot seeds were dropped off at Hillmorton Community Garden by the The Heritage Seed Library (HSL).

The HSL, based at Ryton charity Garden Organic, is celebrating 50 years of seed conservation with a unique seed relay across the UK – and Hillmorton Community Garden is taking part to help conserve and grow heritage varieties.

Kate Warburton, a volunteer at Hillmorton Community Garden and a Community Champion for Garden Organic, said: "We really value our association with Garden Organic and the work they do to preserve heritage varieties.

"Being part of the seed relay and having the chance to grow and enjoy traditional vegetable varieties is a privilege.

"We chose the carrot Egmont Gold to grow. Our carrots did well this year in our raised beds and we are keen to branch out with a different variety and explore a new taste."

Now in its fifth year, the Hillmorton Community Garden community group have transformed the grounds of their local church hall into a community vegetable plot, creating an outdoor living room with a 'Friendly Bench' and raised beds of fruit and vegetables.

Many of the group's volunteers are part of Garden Organic's 'Rugby Community Champions' scheme, run in conjunction with Rugby Borough Council, which offers training and advice to residents about sustainable gardening.

The seed relay aims to conserve the widest variety of vegetable seeds as possible to ensure the survival of homegrown food crops in the face of threats from climate change and a decline in pollinating insects.



Volunteers at Hillmorton Community Garden (left to right: Jill Dwyer, Jasmine, Kate Warburton and Mo) are helping to preserve the Egmont Gold carrot by taking part in the seed relay.

and save, and passed the rest of the seeds onto the next destination.

The HSL is the only living library of heritage vegetables in the UK, and the only seed library that conserves food by sharing heritage seeds with gardeners and communities to help preserve them. Growing out the seeds make them more resilient and better adapted to climate change and local conditions.

Fiona Taylor, CEO of Garden Organic, said: "The Heritage Seed Library conserves seed by sharing it, and this work is a continual relay between places and generations to ensure the survival of heritage vegetables.

"Passing seed on to be grown by friends, neighbours and future generations is a simple action that gardeners and growers can take to ensure our food crops adapt to climate change.

"Seed is a precious natural resource, and open pollinated seed continually adapts to the conditions in which it is sown. This means by passing seed on and sowing it in a variety of places, we are allowing it to survive and thrive."

During the first stage of the giant 50th birthday 'pass-the-parcel' event, precious heritage seeds have travelled more than 180 miles and been shared among key individuals, organisations and communities across England. Further stages will take place across Wales, Scotland and Ireland in 2026.

At each stop-off point, supporting 'seed champions' have taken a packet of seed from the golden anniversary parcel to grow, harvest

and passed the rest of the seeds onto the next destination.

and passed the rest of the seeds onto the next destination.

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Just imagine how that would feel.....



Young Rugby poet picks up Laureate

A TALENTED young writer from a Rugby secondary school has been crowned as Warwickshire's new Young Poet Laureate.

Naomi Mba from Avon Valley School has been named the eleventh Warwickshire Young Poet Laureate, with judges praising her imaginative writing, assured stage presence, and exciting ideas for championing poetry throughout the county.

She won out following a selection day at Rugby Library, which saw six finalists come together for an inspiring celebration of poetry.

The day opened with a dynamic

workshop led by Emilie Lauren Jones, Coventry Poet Laureate 2021-2023, who shared invaluable insights into crafting and performing poetry.

Shortlisted candidates then met with the judging panel to discuss their ambitions for the laureateship, before taking to the stage to perform two original poems in front of an audience.

As the new laureate, Naomi will represent Warwickshire Libraries at public events and inspire other young people to discover the power and possibility of poetry.

Coun Mike Bannister,

Warwickshire County Council's spokesperson for customer and localities, said: "We are incredibly proud of Naomi and all the finalists for their talent and dedication, and we look forward to seeing Naomi share her passion for poetry and inspire our communities across the county and across age groups over the coming year."

The Young Poet Laureate scheme offers young people aged 13-17 an opportunity to develop their writing and performance skills, collaborate with professional poets, and take part in workshops and events across the county.

Coun Bannister added: "The Young Poet Laureate scheme is a wonderful celebration of creativity and self-expression among Warwickshire's young people. Poetry has the power to inspire, connect, and give voice to ideas that matter."

Applications for the next Young Poet Laureate open in January. Visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/youngpoetlaureate or email libraryevents@warwickshire.gov.uk for more information or to apply.

Well versed – the new Warwickshire Young Poet Laureate Naomi Mba (centre), with her predecessor Ananditha Venkatramanan (left) and former Coventry Poet Laureate Emilie Lauren Jones (right).



Warwickshire Mobile Library Service delivers books and smiles.

A moving story...

MOBILE libraries have notched up 8,000 miles in Warwickshire in 2025.

The Mobile Library Service is a vital lifeline for rural communities that combines the power of reading with the warmth of human connection.

Covering 32 routes and 240 stops, the service delivers books and smiles to residents who might otherwise struggle to access a library. With an average of 954 visits per month, the mobile library is on track to make over 11,000 visits this year.

For those unable to leave home, it delivers books directly to 340 people every month, thanks to a dedicated team of staff and 30

volunteers.

Warwickshire County Council's customer spokesperson Coun Mike Bannister said: "Our Mobile Library Service is so much more than books on wheels - it's about reducing isolation, supporting wellbeing, and bringing comfort and connection to people's lives. Whether it's a nursery singing along with our drivers, or an older resident finding solace in a new story, this service truly makes a difference. I encourage everyone to check the routes and make the most of this wonderful resource."

Customers can request books free of charge, enjoy extended loan periods, and return items at any Warwickshire Library.



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LEFT: Resident Lillian enjoying herself at the Lest We Forget Christmas Ball. Picture Royal Star and Garter. MIDDLE: Barbara adds the finishing touches to a tree at the Solihull Home. Picture Royal Star and Garter. RIGHT: Anne meets a new friend. Picture Royal Star and Garter. BELOW RIGHT: Brian and Santa at the Lest We Forget Christmas Ball. Picture Royal Star and Garter

Gathering to share some festive joy

VETERANS soaked up the Christmas cheer at Royal Star and Garter in Solihull.

Residents have been enjoying a feast of festive events, visits, activities, outings and carol concerts with lots more still to come.

They have also been show-

ing off their creative side, helping dress trees, and making wreaths and other decorations and the Tudor Coppice home which cares for veterans and their families, living with disability or dementia.

At the Solihull Home, Army and RAF personnel from Queen Elizabeth

Hospital helped with decorations. Residents donned festive attire for Christmas Jumper Day and they also attended the Lest We Forget Christmas Ball in nearby Walsall.

On Christmas Day residents will receive a bespoke gift from Royal Star and Garter.



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Still time to share views on transport

Now's the time to apply for a primary school place.

THERE is still time for parents to have their say on proposed changes to home to school transport in Warwickshire.

A public consultation runs until Sunday January 4, inviting residents to share their views on a series of updates, which Reform councillors on Warwickshire County Council say are "aimed at improving fairness, consistency, and compliance with home to school national guidance".

WCC's transport spokesperson Coun Jennifer Warren said: "We are committed to delivering a service that is fair, efficient, and cost-effective for all residents."

"These proposed changes are an important step toward creating a more sustainable and consistent approach to home to school transport across Warwickshire."

"Listening to the views of parents, carers, and young people is essential to shaping a policy that reflects both national standards and the long-term needs of our communities."

Visit ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/bi/home-to-school/ to take part in the consultation.

All feedback received will be reviewed and presented to Cabinet. If approved, the revised policy will apply to applications submitted from September 1 2026 onwards.



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Reminder on places

PARENTS across Warwickshire with children who start school in September 2026 are being reminded to apply now for their school place.

Applications opened on November 1, and families have until the deadline of January 15 to submit their application. This applies to children born between September 1 2021 and August 31 2022 who will be starting in reception, as well as children currently in Year 2 at an infant school who will be transferring to a junior school.

Parents and carers are reminded that transfers to junior school do not happen automatically, even between schools with the same name, so a separate application is still required.

Applying on time is important to help families secure a place at one of their preferred schools. To help families to prepare, Warwickshire County Council has a range of online resources, which includes a map of all the Warwickshire primary schools and guidance to find the priority school based on an address.

WCC's Education spokesperson Coun Wayne Briggs said: "Starting school or moving up to junior school is a big step for children and their families, and we want to make the process as smooth as possible. It's really important to get applications in on time, and our website is full of guidance to help you do this."

"Please don't leave the application to the last minute, but give yourself plenty of time to look through all the information and consider all the different options, so that your child has the best chance of getting a place at a school that's right for them."

Visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/primaryplace to apply.

Families who apply by the January 15 deadline will receive their child's school offer on National Offer Day on April 16.



YOUNG singers from Southam St James CE Academy have been spreading festive cheer.

The school choir paid a visit the residents of Tithes Lodge, fresh from performing at Southam Christmas lights switch-on.

The youngsters wanted to make sure everyone in the community experienced their tuneful festive celebration - especially those who might not have been able to attend the town event.

The visit was filled with smiles and seasonal spirit as the children sang a selection of Christmas favourites. Residents thoroughly enjoyed the performance.

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Help to stay active over Twixmas



THE festive season is filled with joy, celebration... and long stretches of cosy downtime.

With social events, rich food and shorter days, it's easy for movement to slip to the bottom of the priority list.

But staying active in December doesn't have to mean skipping mince pies or spending hours in the gym. With a little creativity, you can keep your body moving and enjoy all the magic of the season.

Make movement part of the festivities

The easiest way to stay active is to blend it into your celebrations, take a post-lunch family walk on Christmas Day or Boxing Day, do a winter lights walking route around your neighbourhood or try out winter sports like ice skating, or a stroll round a Christmas market.

When movement is the event, you'll hardly notice you're exercising.

Dress for the weather

Cold weather is one of the biggest barriers to winter exercise. The best way to stay warm is to layer up, with a thermal top, light fleece, waterproof jacket and of course not forgetting tick socks and gloves.

If you're warm and comfortable, you're far more likely to head out-

side — even if it's just for a brisk 15-minute walk.

Keep it short and simple

Forget hour-long workouts, December is about efficiency.

Try a 10–15 minute home workouts, a quick yoga stretch when you wake up, two brisk 10-minute walks and a five-minute mobility break between wrapping presents

Short bursts keep your energy up and help counter long periods of sitting.

Make the most of mornings

Festive evenings fill up fast - dinners, drinks, carol concerts, parties - so mornings are your best bet for consistent movement.

Even a short morning session can boost your mood, keep you energised for the day and educe the temptation to skip exercise later

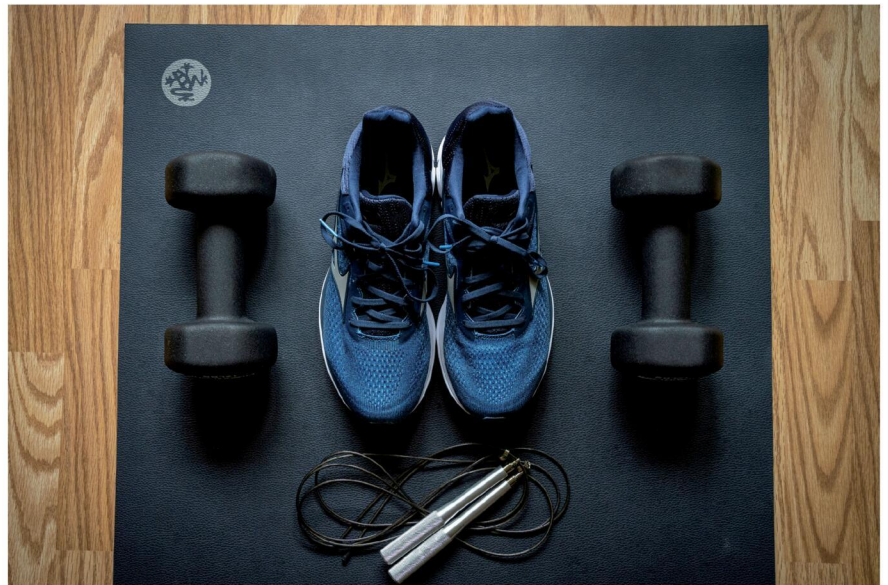
Think a walk with a coffee, gentle stretching, or a quick home routine before the celebrations begin.

Try fun, festive themed workouts

Add a bit of novelty to keep motivation high including 12 Days of Christmas circuits, a festive playlist dance workout a Santa-run or charity fun run.

A sprinkle of silliness goes a long way in December.

Prioritise wellbeing, not perfection



December is not the month for strict fitness rules or guilt.

Instead set a low-pressure goal for example move every day, walk 20 minutes or stretch before bed

Be flexible, if plans change, swap a long workout for a short one.

The key is gentle consistency, not rigidity.

Don't Forget to Rest

Staying active is important, but so is rest. December is emotionally and physically busy. Prioritise good sleep, hydration and relaxation with spending time away from screens and with family and friends.

The goal is to start the new year feeling energised, not exhausted.

The Bottom Line

You don't need a tough regime to stay active during the festive period - just small, joyful habits woven naturally into your days. Movement should feel like a welcome break from the busyness, not another item on the to-do list.

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Special Feature

Festive food to keep out of reach

VETS ARE warning pet owners to keep mince pies and Christmas puddings out of paw's reach over the festive period as more than three quarters report treating dogs

for toxic ingestion after eating sultanas or raisins.

Eating the odd mince pie or slice of Christmas pudding may only risk adding a few inches to owners' waistline, but for dogs and cats, sneaking a few mouthfuls could be

deadly.

The sweet treats, and other festive favourites, contain sultanas and raisins, which can make dogs and cats seriously ill if eaten – and can even be fatal in some cases.

Statistics from the British Veterinary Association's Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey showed that 77.3 per cent of vets saw cases of sultana or raisin-related toxic ingestion in dogs in the last 12 months, an increase from 69 per cent in 2022.

British Veterinary Association president, Dr Rob Williams, said: "Christmas and the weeks leading up to it are always busy, so it can be really easy for tempting treats to be mistakenly left on the floor in shopping bags or under the tree where cheeky pets can reach them.

"The best way to avoid having to make an emergency dash to the vets is to keep all human food and decorations well away from your animals.

"But we know that sometimes, despite best efforts, accidents happen and pets manage to gobble down something they shouldn't, so it's handy to know your vet's emergency procedure and holiday opening hours just in case."

Tips to help pets have a safe and happy holiday

* Festive food

Chocolate (which contains the toxic component theobromine), raisins, grapes, and currants, such as those found in Christmas puddings or mince pies, onions, garlic and leeks, which can be found in gravy and stuffing, are really toxic to dogs and cats.

Fatty, rich foods can trigger sickness and diarrhoea or other conditions such as gastroenteritis and pancreatitis, so don't be tempted to share Christmas dinner.

Alcohol is extremely harmful to pets' liver and nervous systems.

* Decorations and wrapping
Tinsel, tape, bows and ribbons can cause blockages if ingested, which may require emergency surgery.

Glass or plastic baubles, sharp-edged decorations and fairy lights can cause injuries if broken or chewed.

Avoid edible – or potentially edible – decorations like chocolate ornaments.

Candles should be kept away from curious paws and wagging tails to prevent burns or fires.

Don't keep wrapped food presents under the tree where pets can sniff them out.

* Christmas trees
Using a sturdy base or anchor the tree to a wall to stop it toppling over.

Block off access to your pet if they show too much interest



Festive plants can be harmful to pets. Image by Sandra Kapella from Pixabay

* Beware of Toxic Plants
Eating poinsettias, holly and mistletoe can lead to vomiting, diarrhoea, and even heart issues.

Lilies are extremely dangerous for cats all year round, even in tiny amounts.

* Cold weather hazards
Antifreeze is extremely poisonous to cats. Clean up any spills immediately.

Salt and grit should be washed off your pet's straight away after walks to prevent irritation or ingestion of harmful substances.

Any concerns or if you're unsure that your pet has consumed something they shouldn't, call a vet and get advice.



Christmas treats should be kept out of sight, and paws, of pets.

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* Christmas Markets

Christmas Shop



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Eco Feature

Sustainability at Christmastime



EVERYONE is more aware of how important it is to be more sustainable in many aspects of their

lives.

Yet ripped wrapping paper, discarded Christmas trees, and monumental amounts of food waste make Christmas a time when we 'do not give to the planet'.

Christmas is a time of excess in more ways than one.

But through some simple eco hacks, you can have a greener Christmas this year and save some pennies along the way.

Wrapping Paper

According to GWP Group, the average consumer in the UK uses 227,000 miles of wrapping paper each year.

Some wrapping paper has a plastic film which means, in many cases, it cannot be recycled, leaving ripped-up pieces of paper lying around landfills.

To be more eco-friendly this year, when unwrapping presents, try not to rip the paper off the gifts and instead fold it up and keep it for next year.

This little hack can save you from buying wrapping paper next year while avoiding lengths of wrapping paper ending up in landfills.

Save a tree

Real Christmas trees are one of the best ways a person can have a greener Christmas.

If you have a tree in a pot, it can be replanted in your garden and reused yearly or could make a beautiful outdoor Christmas tree.

However, fresh-cut trees cannot be planted, but you can recycle them through schemes hosted by charities and companies.

If you have a fake tree, keep using it and try to make it last as long as possible before possibly switching to a real one.

Outside Christmas lights

The cost of living is pulling on everyone's purse strings and, with energy costs soaring, turning off your Christmas lights late at night can save you money and the planet.

Turning off your Christmas lights at a set time each night or scheduling them on for two hours can stop vast amounts of energy waste while still enjoying your festive display.

Leftover food

Food waste is one of the leading excesses we have at Christmas.

Cooked food cannot be recycled or put in compost, leaving masses of it being thrown away each Christmas.



Some Christmas food is frozen or can last a few days if kept in the fridge to be eaten.

Christmas baps are one way you can reduce your food wastage by using up leftover food to make a festive sandwich.

Certain foods can also be fro-

zen and reheated to be eaten for another day.

Unwanted presents

At Christmas, we all get presents that we may not like, and instead of throwing these away, if unopened,

they can be donated to local charities.

Or they can be kept and distributed to your friends and family next Christmas – just make sure you remember who gave you the present first.

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Special Feature

Celebrations across the globe

“TWIXMAS” is a modern British term for the quiet, in-between days from December 26 to December 31.

Other cultures don't usually use the word Twixmas, but many have long-standing traditions for this same “between holidays” period.

Here are some of the most notable:

Germany and Austria - Zeit zwischen den Jahren

Literally “the time between the years,” this period is seen as reflective and a bit mystical.

Many people visit family, relax, and avoid work.

Old folk customs include Rauhnächte (the “Rough Nights”) - 12 mystical nights with traditions like burning incense to “cleanse” the home.

Some avoid doing laundry or major chores due to old superstitions.

Scandinavia - “Romjul” (Norway)/Mellandagarna (Sweden)

A time for rest, visiting relatives, eating leftovers, and spending time outdoors.

Many offices close or run reduced hours.

Norwegians often go skiing. Swedes enjoy sales similar to Boxing Day promotions.

Spain - Between Navidad and Reyes

This is an active, festive period leading up to Three Kings' Day (January 6).

Families go out to enjoy holiday lights, markets, and parades.

Children are excitedly anticipating gifts from the Three Kings.

Italy - Between Natale and Capodanno

The “in-between” days are used for long meals, visiting family, and gift exchanges.

Many people rest before the big celebration of New Year's Eve (Capodanno).

Some regions maintain folk traditions, such as bonfires or fortune rituals.

Greece - The Dodekaímero (12 days of Christmas)

Considered a continuous festive season from December 25 to January 6.

Traditions include carols, parties, church services, and folklore about mischievous goblins (kallikántzari) said to roam during these days.

Japan - Omisoka Prep Period

Japan doesn't celebrate Christmas religiously, but the days between December 26 to December 30 are crucial for deep house-cleaning (osoji), preparing osechi (New Year's food), traveling to visit family, and wrapping up the year's business before Shogatsu (New Year).



China - Not a major festival period

As Christmas isn't traditionally celebrated, the days between December 26 and December 31 are mostly normal workdays.

Young people may still enjoy Christmas sales or Western-style decorations.

The big festivities instead cluster around Lunar New Year, usually in late January or February.

Latin America - Post-Christmas Posadas to Día de Reyes

In many Latin American countries, the Christmas season extends until January 6.

Families enjoy leftovers, gatherings, and community events.

Many places host fiestas, fireworks, and holiday markets.

Children anticipate gifts from the Three Wise Men.

United States and Canada

While not formally named “Twixmas,” the week between Christmas and New Year is widely understood as a time for relaxation, shopping returns, travel, and informal family gatherings.

Many offices shut down or run half-capacity.



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THE NATIONAL Trust is inviting visitors to experience the magic of Christmas at its sites across Coventry and Warwickshire during the festive season.

The heritage conservation charity is inviting residents to visit historic houses decorated in the style of Christmases gone by, walk seasonal family trails, take part in classic Christmas crafts, or wander through festive gardens.

A National Trust spokesperson said: "As the nights draw in and the air turns colder, National Trust places provide the perfect setting to celebrate the season.

"There's no better way to embrace the festive spirit than by exploring these special places with friends and family."

Coventry Charterhouse - <https://tinyurl.com/2nkyxfrz> - until January 4 - 9am-5pm (house opens 10am-4pm).

The restored 14th century former Carthusian monastery will be decorated for the season. Throughout December, visitors can enjoy special seasonal events including immersive performances of A Christmas Carol, craft workshops and family activities.



Coventry Charterhouse. Picture by National Trust/Victoria Beddoes.

Visitors can also take a winter stroll through the walled garden and grounds, then warm up in the cafe with a hot drink and homemade treat.

Charlecote Park - <https://tinyurl.com/4mttz3sj> - until January 4 - 9am-4pm (house opens 11am).

Charlecote Park has been styled for a Victorian masquerade ball this festive season. Visitors can travel back to the 1840s and explore the house to take in the splendour

of giant Christmas trees, have a go at waltzing in the ballroom, reminisce about Christmas pasts in the Memories Room, and hop on the carriage for an unforgettable photo.

The Butler's trail invites visitors to play games to help the servants complete their tasks before the winter ball, and the deer park offers brisk winter walks.

Baddesley Clinton - <https://tinyurl.com/mus9thwf> - until January 4 - 9am-4pm (house opens 10.30am).

Explore the house where the kitchen is all abustle with the preparation of festive food, the log fire in the Great Hall is burning to keep the chill at bay and the children are dreaming of the snowmen they might build and the fun of snowball fights ahead.

The Venue is also hosting The Snowman Trail, presented by Wild in Art. Twelve giant sculptures will be displayed throughout the gardens, inviting guests to spot each one as part of the seasonal celebration.



The landscaped deer park is one of the features through the gate at Charlecote Park. Picture by National Trust/Jana Eastwood.



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New Year Feature

Trying something new in 2026

WITH the new year always comes a sense of wanting to do or try something new.

Whether it is to reach a goal, bring some joy or just put yourself out of your comfort zone, there are plenty of hobbies and past-times you could take up.

To get an idea of the kind of things which could be taken up, we looked at the top leisure activities across the UK.

You will probably not be surprised to see that - according to top pollsters YouGov - the top five are: listening to music, using the Internet, reading, travelling and going to restaurants.

And, while most of us probably do these regularly, you could vary them - maybe try listening to different bands or genres of music, set yourself a target to read so many books in a certain amount of time or travel to some places you have never visited - either in the UK or abroad.

FYI, the rest of the top 10 consists of watching movies on TV, spending time with family, walking, spending time at home and visiting historical sites.

Traditional

Among the traditional leisure activities we think about, baking is 15th, doing puzzles is in 17th (jigsaw puzzles is 36th), going to

the cinema is 19th and gardening is 20th. Maybe you could start a gardening project to create a new plot or area. Quizzes and pub quizzes are 24th and 25th respectively, tenpin bowling is 30th and DIY is 43rd - undertaken by 53 per cent of the population. Brits are notoriously renowned for not being able to speak the lingo when they go abroad but learning foreign languages is 46th in the list - done by 52 per cent (over half) of us. Wine making is 59th and wine tasting is 66th. Collecting things is 73rd and playing chess is 76th.

Arts and crafts

When it comes to creative past-times, the most popular one is photography which, according to the figures, 72 per cent of us do. In 32nd place is playing a musical instrument (the guitar is the most popular of those), in 37th is writing and 41st is drawing. Telling jokes is 44th but watching stand-up comedy is 35th (enjoyed by 57 per cent of the population) so maybe you could give that a go. Painting is the 61st most popular past-time and acting is 62nd. Knitting is 95th.

Health and wellbeing

We all need a bit of relaxation and in this category, meditation is 68th and yoga is 69th - both done

regularly by 45 per cent of the population. Pilates (which could equally go in the category below) is 93rd.

Fitness

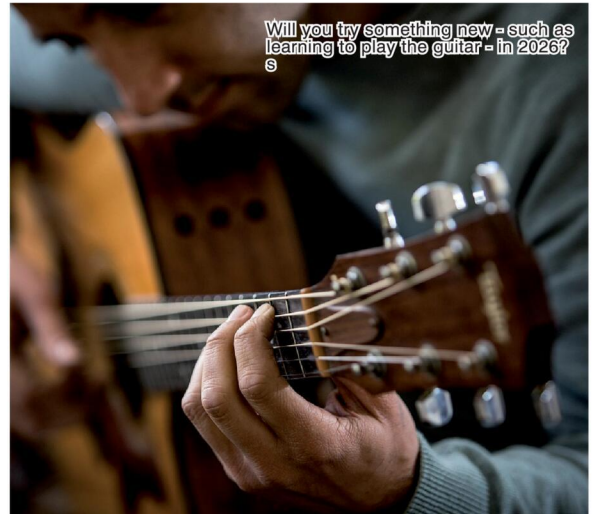
After walking, the next most popular fitness activity is swimming in 18th - 68 per cent of us do that regularly. Following that is trekking or hiking in 26th, playing sport is 50th and running or jogging is 53rd. Playing the nation's most-loved sport and beautiful game - football - is 57th and cycling is 58th. Weight-training is 77th, Zumba is 102nd and going to the gym 105th. Of course, all of these are a great way to meet new people and get fit at the same time and there will be plenty of clubs and groups in your local area you could seek out.

Out and about

Visiting museums is 16th, going to the theatre is 29th, watching live music is 31st, birdwatching is 78th, going to festivals is 83rd and going to the ballet or dance is 136th.

Wild cards

If you want to have a go at something, not done by many people, here are our pick of the 'wild cards' - at the very least it will probably make a good conversation start-



Will you try something new - such as learning to play the guitar - in 2026?

er. Puppetry, in 148th, is undertaken by just 17 per cent of the population, as is Tarot. Even less popular is Quilling art - delicately rolling, shaping and gluing thin strips of paper to create decorative designs for cards and pictures and 'Cardistry' - performing and manip-

ulating playing cards to create visually stunning flourishes, cuts, fans, and patterns. So there you go.

Whatever you choose to do, give it your all, enjoy yourself and take pride at the end of 2026 that you tried something new.

Browse the Winter Edition of Seasons



As winter's chill begins to settle across our three counties, there's a certain kind of beauty that only this time of year brings.

This, then, feels like the perfect moment to launch **'Seasons'** - our brand-new glossy magazine, created to celebrate the people, places, and stories that make Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands such a wonderful part of the world

Pick up a copy locally for free, or simply browse on line www.seasons-magazine.com



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'Seasons' magazine is brought to you by your local 'Observer' Newspaper team

Each quarter, Seasons will follow the rhythm of the year - from the crisp calm of winter to the first buds of spring, the brightness of summer and the richness of autumn - highlighting the very best of local life, from independent shops and community ventures to countryside walks, home inspiration, and hidden gems worth discovering.

Our first Winter edition is all about warmth - in every sense of the word. You'll find features that reflect the spirit of the season: comforting food, inspiring people, caring places, and ways to make the cold months glow with local charm.

This magazine is for you - our readers, neighbours and local businesses - and we can't wait to share the year ahead with you, one beautiful season at a time.

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What's the best present you can give yourself this Christmas?



Picture by Swloczyk2 from Pixabay

THERE is so much to love about the journey into winter. In the Northern Hemisphere, cold lashing rain might be the reality, but there are so many ways you can spin the next few months so they feel like a delight for the senses rather than a drain on your reserves. How? We need to take our lead from the Scandinavians, who have the joys of this entire season rolled into one gorgeous concept - Hygge.

What is Hygge?

Hygge (pronounced 'hoo-gah') is a Danish/Norwegian word that's all about creating a warm, cosy atmosphere. It's all about slowing down and enjoying the simple pleasures in life.

So, how can you bring more hygge into your life this season? Hygge doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, much of its beauty lies in the simplicity of it.

Here are 10 simple ways to introduce hygge into your life this winter

1. Cosy space. Add some soft lighting, blankets, and pillows to your living room or bedroom. It doesn't take much, but it can completely change the feel of a space.
2. Warming drinks. There's something incredibly comforting about holding a warm mug in your hands. Herbal teas, a healthy hot chocolate, or even a simple cup of warm milk are perfect for chilly evenings.
3. Candles everywhere. Lighting a candle in the evening can create

4. Comfort food. It's that time of year when hearty soups, slow-cooked stews, or a warm bowl of porridge is on the menu. Simple, nourishing meals are the ultimate in comfort and are perfect for the colder months.
5. Digital detox. Try switching off from screens for an hour or two in the evening. Without the constant buzz of notifications, you'll be able to unwind and relax much more easily.
6. Snuggle up with a book. There's something beautifully hygge

7. Connect with loved ones. Hygge is all about togetherness, so make time to catch up with friends or family. Whether it's in person or over a video call, those connections are so important for your wellbeing.
8. Mindful moments. Hygge encourages us to be present and appreciate the little things. For you, that might mean savouring a cup of tea or watching the rain outside, take a few moments each day to just *be*.
9. Woolly socks and comfy clothes.

There's nothing better than changing into something cosy at the end of the day. Consider this your sign to yourself to some soft, cashmere socks or a warm jumper.

10. Winter walks. Although it might well be freezing outside, there's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing... Even on the coldest days, there's something refreshing about being out in nature.

Remember, it's okay to slow down and take time for yourself, especially as the holidays approach. Hygge is a reminder that self-care isn't selfish - it's necessary.

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Scrutinising the small screen...

THE MOST controversial TV moments of 2025 have been revealed - with reality shows and daytime TV dominating the list.

Media agency One Day Agency (<https://oneday.agency>) analysed data from the Office of Communications (Ofcom) to reveal which shows sparked the most viewer complaints.

Love Island was the most complained about television show of the year, generating an astounding 15,929 complaints.

The highest volume of complaints arose on July 24, with 3,547 complaints due to bullying against Shakira Khan. Other complaints arose after contestant Dejon Noel-Williams's behaviour toward Megan Moore was seen as gaslighting and made viewers uncomfortable.

Good Morning Britain generated the second highest number of complaints with 2,185. On September 11 the show received 354 complaints when Nels Abbey made controversial comments about Charlie Kirk and his assassination.

Most recently, the show drew 452 complaints on November 7 with viewers unhappy about how presenters handled their interview with Second World War veteran Alec Penstone in the lead up to Remembrance Sunday.

Vanessa, a tabloid talk show hosted by Vanessa Feltz, premiered in March 2025 and features celebrity guests. Although Vanessa had reported complaints on only two dates this year, the TV show had the third highest number of

complaints at 1,986. On June 10, Ofcom received 1,856 complaints and 130 complaints three days later - both due to the show's segment on breastfeeding and its benefits, which some viewers found misleading.

An episode of Big Brother which aired on September 28 amassed 1,411 complaints. The October 7 episode received 398 complaints and the live eviction episode on October 10 received 261 complaints. The majority of the complaints were due to Caroline Monk misgendering Zelah Glasson. On October 28, the show received 345 complaints that stemmed from Caroline's behaviour towards Richard.

Celebrity Big Brother generated 1,409 complaints during its 24th series. On April 9, the show generated the highest number of complaints, with an astounding 1,010. The episode included a controversial interaction between housemates JoJo Siwa and Mickey Rourke, during which Rourke used offensive language directed at Siwa.

Headliners had 1,347 reported complaints in 2025, all generated from January 22 when presenter Josh Howie used a slur towards the LGBTQ+ community. In addition to the 1,347 complaints that Ofcom recorded, the Good Law Project also provided 71,851 complaints to Ofcom.

Today with Samantha Washington generated 1,270 complaints. They all came from a single day, June 7, when viewers objected to a presenter's comments about the Madleen vessel, which was attempting to



deliver aid to Gaza.

Britain's Got Talent's highest number of complaints (771) came from an episode that aired on February 22 due to a horror-themed performance. The show garnered 1,118 complaints overall.

The Brit Awards 2025, which aired on March 1, ranks ninth with 929 complaints. This Morning follows with 713 complaints, with all of the complaints coming from the August 27 episode. The majority of

the complaints were about Sabrina Carpenter's performance.

Emmerdale rounds out the top ten most complained about shows of 2025 with 737 complaints. Emmerdale's most recent complaints stemmed from the November 10 episode, as many viewers felt the show was taking a noticeably darker path with its characters.

Alexandra Goncalves, Paid Media Manager for One Day Agency, said: "Viewer complaints reveal what

really captures public attention. When audiences take the time to reach out to Ofcom, it shows that they care deeply about what they are watching.

"People do not complain about shows they feel indifferent toward. They complain because the content has struck a nerve or touched on something they feel strongly about. In many ways, complaints are a reflection of how emotionally engaged the audience is.



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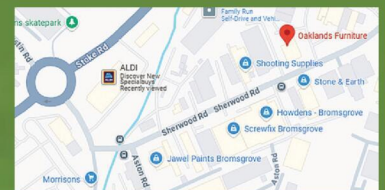
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Complete the grid so that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9.

EASY

	6	7		3		4		
		9			1		6	7
2				4				3
7		2		5			9	6
	3	4	1		2		8	
8	5				7			
			9	8			5	4
5	2		6			8		
		8		7		6	3	

HARD

			5			2		
		4			6	3		
				3		9	8	
2					1	8		6
	5						9	
4		1	9					3
	6	7		8				
		2	6			4		
		3			2			

PATHFINDER

Beginning with the top highlighted letter, follow a continuous path of words associated with the given subject. The trail goes through each letter once, twisting up, down and sideways, but never diagonally.

Children's authors

P P P J U D L U E N I D B L Y
 H I U N A Y B M K E N F E N T
 I L L L M A B E I A O I N N O
 A H C E D W A N A N J L E A N
 E L I N D R N I S O N E Y A R
 O M M S S A L D N O M D K D
 R R G O U E N O D Y S R U I P
 P U A A N E L I A I N T N I L
 B E M I L J U H T C K E G N C
 L I R A M L H R I M K K S A O
 A C O L H L A O A S I C U S O
 M K L L A B D D L G N I D E P
 A N A A N E R N C S L I S R J
 E T P X T A G O I W E W E U A
 R T O I R E B S L E N I L Q C

Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

1		2		3			4		5		6
7							8				
						9					
10									11		
12						13					
						14				15	16
						17				18	
19		20							21		
22							23				
24								25			

ACROSS

7. Merited (6)
8. Empty (6)
10. Wrap up (7)
11. Irate (5)
12. Chances (4)
13. Disdain (5)
17. Perspire (5)
18. Inflamed eyelid (4)
22. Permit (5)
23. Remark (7)
24. Abandon (6)
25. Staggered (6)

DOWN

1. Evolve (7)
2. Supply (7)
3. Kingdom (5)
4. Gruesome (7)
5. Scope (5)
6. Remains (5)
9. Watcher (9)
14. Clumsy (7)
15. Surprise (7)
16. Protects (7)
19. Robust (5)
20. Near (5)
21. Awry (5)

Scribble pad

LADDER

Using the clues provided, fill in each step of the ladder with a new word, changing one letter at a time.

- Youth
- Prepared a golf shot
- Nurse
- Curve
- Attach



NINER

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

- 17531 gives an Asian country;
- 87932 gives an African river;
- 6371274 gives an Irish county.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

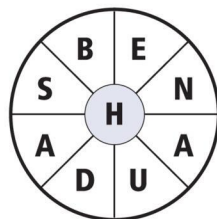
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter. For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.

	7		22		13			25		2				
A	8	14	3	23	4	26	20	1	10	18		2		
B														
C	12			12	23	16			18		14	9	14	
D														
E	3				4		23	23	8	14		26		6
F														
G	19	4	6	20	22	M		3						22
H														
I		16			6	A	25	25	14	2	2	23	3	5
J														
K		12				25		17		26			14	
L														
M	2	14	12	3	14	12	6	18	14					2
N														
O	1							3		21	6	20	18	8
P														
Q	24		14		7	23	16	5		16			23	
R														
S	18	6	24			6			23	21	14		3	
T														
U	5		6	11	11	4	6	20		26	14	14	20	
V														
W														
X														
Y														
Z														

WORDWHEEL

You have 10 mins to find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the hub letter and at least 3 others. Letters may be used only once. You cannot use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one 9-letter word to be found.



How you rate
 8 words: average
 12 words: good
 16 words: very good
 20 or more: excellent.

A history of Panto (oh yes it is)



NOT MANY people know that the roots to the traditional pantomime we know today lie in ancient Greece and Rome and date back hundreds of years.

The shows we enjoy over the festive season combine music, slapstick comedy, plenty of one-liners, dance, and audience participation.

Early forms of pantomime emerged in Roman entertainment as wordless storytelling through expressive gestures, often performed alongside music.

This tradition waned with the fall of the Roman Empire but saw a revival during the Italian Renaissance in the 16th century through commedia dell'arte, a theatrical tradition featuring stock characters, improvisation, and physical comedy.

British pantomime

By the 18th century, pantomime evolved into a distinctly British art form. Influenced by Italian commedia and French mime traditions, English pantos blended these with local folk tales and Christmas traditions. John Rich, an early innovator, introduced Harlequinade, a comic performance featuring Harlequin and Colombine, laying the groundwork for modern pantomime.

In the Victorian era, pantomime gained popularity as a Christmas entertainment for families, incorporating fairy tales, music hall comedy, and cross-

dressings, with men playing 'dames' and women often portraying principal boys. Audience participation became a hallmark, with frequent call-and-response interactions.

Modern pantomime, performed primarily in the UK, retains its traditional roots while embracing contemporary elements like pop music and topical humor.

It remains a festive spectacle filled with exaggerated characters, magical settings, and humor for all ages, keeping its centuries-old legacy alive.

Pantomime today

Pantomimes, or 'pantos', are still a cherished British Christmas tradition today, blending comedy, music, and audience participation.

These family-friendly shows bring classic fairytales, such as Cinderella, Aladdin and Jack and the Beanstalk to life, often with a modern twist. Featuring exaggerated characters, slapstick humour, and topical jokes, pantos are as much about the experience as the story.

The 'he's behind you' and 'oh yes it is', 'oh no it isn't' lines are still balled out by audiences across the country.

Today, pantomimes remain vital to British theatre, often generating the highest ticket sales of the year. They feature a mix of seasoned actors and celebrities, from reality TV stars to beloved comedians, boosting their appeal. Spectacular sets, dazzling costumes, and special effects make modern pantos visual extravaganzas.

The biggest pantomimes are staged in large venues, like the London Palladium and Birmingham Hippodrome, where productions draw thousands. The Palladium's panto, starring a star-studded cast, is often considered the pinnacle of festive theatre. Similarly, regional theatres across the UK rely on pantos to fund other productions throughout the year, underscoring their economic importance.

Pantomimes continue to bring communities together, preserving a unique blend of tradition, humor, and holiday magic. And there will be plenty of pantomimes to catch in your local area.

Here are the top ten pantomimes in the UK

1. Cinderella – Often referred to as the 'jewel of pantomimes', Cinderella is a perennial favourite, filled with romance, magic, and the hilarious antics of the Ugly Sisters.
2. Aladdin – A tale of adventure and wishes, Aladdin delights audiences with its flying carpets, magical genies, and comedic characters like Widow Twankey.
3. Peter Pan – The boy who never grows up takes audiences on a journey to Neverland, complete with Captain Hook, Tinker Bell, and plenty of swashbuckling.
4. Jack and the Beanstalk – This giant-slaying adventure brings laughter and suspense with a magical beanstalk and a lovable cow.
5. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs – This fairytale comes to life with comedy from the dwarfs



Cinderella is the number one panto in the UK's

and the ever-evil Queen, alongside a classic love story.

6. Beauty and the Beast – Combining romance and comedy, Beauty and the Beast is a visually stunning show with a heartwarming message.

7. Sleeping Beauty – With its magical fairies and a wicked villain, this story is a family favorite featuring lots of laughs and a heroic prince.

8. Dick Whittington – A London-based tale of ambition and adventure, Dick Whittington features a heroic rat-catching cat.

9. Goldilocks and the Three Bears – This circus-themed panto is a lesser-known gem, filled with laughs, songs, and thrilling acrobatics.

10. Robin Hood – A swashbuckling tale of good versus evil, Robin Hood features sword fights, archery, and plenty of comedy.

These pantomimes continue to captivate audiences across the UK, blending tradition, humor, and festive magic.

So, if you have not already, why not go and support your local pantomime?

Wishing all our Readers and Advertisers a
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Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

SCHOOL LANE, WOLVEY

Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic between points opposite to Furlox and The Paddocks.

Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 14 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Callan Connect, Tel: 01213 275 167.

UNION STREET, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic from the junction with Russelsheim Way.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs - 16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 13 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

MONKS KIRBY LANE & BOND END, MONKS KIRBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works for renewal of a water main.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 22 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: Main Street, Millers Lane, Fosse Way, Coal Pit Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Severn Trent Water, Tel: 08007 834 444.

FRANKTON LANE, STRETTON ON DUNSMORE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from a point outside the garage.

Reason for Order: To enable works for new water connection.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 26 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Frankton Lane, Princethorpe Road, Rugby Road, Fosse Way, and vice versa.

Contractor: P Hughs Construction Ltd, Tel: 07967 482 888.

CROSS STREET, LONG LAWFORD

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.

Order Commences: 13 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 15 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Cross Street, Main Street, Baileys Lane, School Street and vice versa.

Contractor: M J Quinn, Tel: 01543 547 118.

A426 LEICESTER ROAD, RUGBY (SOUTH BOUND CARRIAGEWAY ONLY)

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from Technology Drive to Newbold Road.

Reason for Order: Carriageway works, overnight 20.00hrs-06.00hrs.

Order Commences: 11 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 12 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: A426 Leicester Road, A5 Watling Street, A361 Daventry Road, A361 Ashby Road, A361 Drayton Way, A45 Brawston Road, A45 London Road, A45 Daventry Road, B4429 Coventry Road, A45 London Road, A4071 Straight Mile, A4071 Blue Boar Flyover, A4071 Coventry Road, A4071 Rugby Western Relief Road, A4071 Parkfield Road, A4071 Rugby Western Relief Road, A4071 Newbold Road.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

CAWSTON LANE, DUNCHURCH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from Coventry Road to Northampton Lane.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs-16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 16 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: B4642 Coventry Road, Alwyn Road, Northampton Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

MILL FURLONG, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works to repair/replace defective manhole frame and covers.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 12 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Mill Furlong, Benches Furlong, Longstork Road and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 298 599.

NORTHAMPTON LANE, DUNCHURCH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works to repair/replace defective manhole frame and covers.

Order Commences: 13 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 13 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Cavston Lane, Rugby Road, Northampton Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389 363.

LITTLE LAWFORD LANE, LITTLE LAWFORD

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To safely enable tree trimming works.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 12 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Harborough Road, Rugby Road, Pailton Road, Coventry Road, Stretton Road, Main Street, Lutterworth Road, The Crescent, Broad Street, Fosse Way, Newnham Lane, Bretford Road, Little Lawford Road, Little Lawford Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Environmental Solutions, Tel: 07824 014 740.

LONGSTORK ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works to repair/replace defective manhole frame and covers.

Order Commences: 14 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 14 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Crackthorne Drive, Tower Furlong and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 298 599.

FLECKNOE ROAD, LEAMINGTON HASTINGS

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable installation of a boundary box and meter.

Order Commences: 13 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 14 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Southam Road, Hospital Lane, Main Street, Hayway Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

OVERSLADE MANOR DRIVE, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between properties number 29 to 31.

Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 13 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Overslade Manor Drive and vice versa.

Contractor: Core Highways, Tel: 07979 296 733.

TEESWATER CLOSE, LONG LAWFORD

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works to repair/replace defective manhole frame and covers.

Order Commences: 13 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 13 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 298 599.

CHURCH ROAD, GRANDBOROUGH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works for hydrant chamber rebuild.

Order Commences: 13 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 15 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Church Road, Main Street, Sawbridge Road and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

THE LOCKS, HILLMORTON, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Holes and trenching in tarmac footway for reinforcement scheme.

Order Commences: 15 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 22 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Network Plus, Tel: 08081 642 252.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

THE WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (B4455 BRINKLOW) (30 MPH SPEED LIMIT) (VARIATION NO.1) ORDER 2025

Warwickshire County Council propose to make the above-named Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the effect of which will be to impose a 30mph speed limit on the length of road mentioned in the Schedule below.

A copy of the proposed Order, together with a plan showing the length of road affected and a statement of the Council's reasons for proposing to make the Order, may be inspected at the Main Reception, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick and on the Council's website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/20208/rugby-borough>

Any objections to or representations in support of the proposals, which must be in writing and specify the grounds on which they are made, should be addressed to Dana Loxley, Safety Engineering Team, Communities Directorate, Warwickshire County Council (telephone number 01926 412889) or send by email to danaloxley@warwickshire.gov.uk using subject header "B4455 Brinklow 30mph Variation No.1 Speed Limit Order".

(Objections, representations, and the name of the objector or person making a representation, will normally be treated as public information and may be published. For further information on how Warwickshire County Council processes personal data please refer to the Customer Privacy Notice which is available at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privacy>). Objections and representations must be sent so as to be received by 16th January 2026.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

SOLI HULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING PUBLICITY

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 or Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

A copy of the application(s) described below as submitted to the Council may be inspected during normal office hours at Solihull Connect, Library Square, Touchwood, Solihull. Any written representations in respect of the proposals must be made within 21 days of publication of this Notice to the Head of Development & Regulatory Management at the address below quoting the application number concerned. The application plans may be amended before decision, but only if the Council considers the amendments substantial will representatives be notified.

REF No: PL/2025/02180/PPFL **Location:** Jaguar Land Rover Lode Lane Solihull B92 8NW **Reason:** Major Development **Development:** The erection of a steel frame building with associated yard space and car parking, road realignment and installation of 2 No. roundabouts.

REF No: PL/2025/02242/VAR **Location:** 20 Union Road Solihull B91 3EF **Reason:** Major Development **Development:** Variation of condition 1 of planning permission dated 09.01.2017 (PL/2016/02255/PPFL) for alterations and extensions to an existing building and infilling of garages, to create an additional two storeys, 8 units and a redesign of 2 units; for material changes for a change in colour of the spandrel panels at ground, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th floors.

Mark Andrews - Head of Service Planning Design and Engagement Economy and Infrastructure, Council House, Manor Square, Solihull B91 3QB Date: 26.12.2025

WWW.SOLI HULL.GOV.UK

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

WELSH ROAD EAST, SOUTHAM

Order Effect: A 30mph Speed Limit will be imposed on Welsh Road East, Southam extending the existing 30mph limit for a distance of 85 metres in a south easterly direction.

Reason for Order: For the safety of all road users and of the contractors working on or near to the highway.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 28 January 2026.

Contractor: Chasetown Civil Engineering Ltd, Tel: 01543 682 564.

RIDGEWAY LANE, LONG ITCHINGTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic

Reason for Order: To enable works for installation of a new boundary box.

Order Commences: 15 January 2026 for up to 18 months

Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 24 Dec 2025

PUBLIC NOTICES

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01527 588688

PUBLIC NOTICES

Rugby Borough Council Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Application Number R25/0721 51 HILLMORTON ROAD, RUGBY, CV22 5AE

Partial retrospective application for the demolition of and replacement of out-building and amendments to boundary wall and dropped kerbs.

This development may affect a Conservation Area

Application Number R25/0936 AS EAST LOGISTICS PARK, GIBBET LANE, SHAWELL

Outline planning permission, with all matters reserved save for access, for up to 60,000sqm of employment floorspace within Use Class B8, a new roundabout site access off the A5, amended site access from Gibbet Lane, plus landscaping, sustainable drainage, earthworks and all other associated works and infrastructure.

This development may affect a Public Right of Way. This is a major development

Application Number R25/1045 THURLASTON MEADOWS CARE HOME, MAIN STREET, THURLASTON, RUGBY, CV23 9JS

Variation of conditions 2 and 17 of R21/0152 (various extensions) changes to previously approved plans.

This development may affect a Conservation Area. This development may affect a Public Right of Way

Members of the public may inspect copies of the application, the plans and documents submitted with it online at: www.planningportal.rugby.gov.uk or in an electronic form at Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby CV21 2RR between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday until 16 January 2026. Please note a planning officer would not be present.

If you wish to make an appointment to discuss the application please contact the case officer:

Any person who wishes to make representation to the above mentioned Council about the applications should make them online - www.planningportal.rugby.co.uk (search for application number and select comment) - or in writing by that date to The Chief Officer Growth and Investment, Town Hall, Rugby, CV21 2RR.</

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BRINGING YOU **ALL THE LATEST** SPORTS NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE AREA

Bears drop Birmingham name in T20 Blast rebrand for 2026

CRICKET: WARWICKSHIRE'S T20 teams will rebrand for the 2026 season with the club to drop their previously adopted Birmingham name.

The club will revert to their Warwickshire Bears name in the T20 Blast from the 2026 campaign and beyond.

Warwickshire switched to the Birmingham Bears name from the 2014 season for their T20 team only.

However, the club now want to unite the men's and women's teams under one identity looking to the future.

Warwickshire chief executive, Stuart Cain said: "Warwickshire has and always will be at the heart of who we are. It's our identity and has been for well over a century.



Warwickshire's Edgbaston home will again play host to the men's T20 Finals Day.

"Over a decade ago, the club decided to be bold with a city-based name for our T20 team, and it saw attendances grow to record levels

and attract new fans to the Bears. "But with our long-term future in mind, and following feedback from members through the Members'

Committee, now is the right time for change.

"We represent the county, and that's what returning to Warwickshire Bears is about."

FIXTURES RELEASED

The rebranded Bears will begin the 2026 T20 Blast season with a trip to Gloucestershire while the club's women's side travel to Essex.

Warwickshire's men head to Gloucestershire on May 22 with the women's side to play Essex on the same day.

And both Warwickshire teams play at Edgbaston for the first time in 2026, in the first of five double-headers over the course of the season, on May 24 against Somerset.

The men's team then play local rivals Worcestershire Rapids at New Road (May 29) in the first derby clash of the campaign.

The Bears play the Pears in the reverse derby fixture at Edgbaston later in the summer (June 26).

Edgbaston will once again host Finals Day with the women's Finals Day to take place at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff.

Warwickshire begin their County Championship campaign against Surrey in April with the county hoping to improve on last season's fifth-place finish in Division One.

And the Bears will again return to Rugby School in the One-Day Cup for three home matches in August.

More details regarding the club's fixtures can be found online at: rugbyobserver.co.uk/sport

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