

Surrey's hotline for mental health

22 February 2024



Ahead of Helpline Awareness Day (Friday, 23 February), Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Surrey County Council are highlighting a local 24-hour NHS mental health crisis helpline that supports almost 50,000 people each year.

The Mental Health Crisis Helpline, run by Surrey and Borders Partnership, is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Since it started in 2010 it has helped around 600,000 people.

It is staffed by trained professionals who are ready to listen and offer advice, support and signpost to a range of community services.

A mental health crisis is when you feel at breaking point, and you need urgent help. You might be:

- Feeling extremely anxious and having panic attacks or flashbacks
- Feeling suicidal, or self-harming
- Having an episode of hypomania or mania, (feeling very high) or psychosis (maybe hearing voices, or feeling very paranoid)
- Other behaviour that feels out of control and is likely to endanger yourself or others

As well as the Mental Health Crisis Helpline, Surrey and Borders Partnership also provides five Safe Havens across Surrey which provide out-of-hours help and support to adults who are experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress.

These Safe Havens are in Aldershot, Epsom, Guildford, Redhill and Woking and are open evenings, weekends and bank holidays. Each one is staffed by a mental health practitioner from Surrey and Borders Partnership and two trained Safe Haven workers.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Health said: *"We are committed to breaking the silence surrounding mental health and providing a safe, confidential and non-judgmental way for people in Surrey to seek help.*

"We believe that mental health support should be available to everyone. No one should have to suffer in silence - the Mental Health Crisis Helpline is here for anyone who needs it.

"There is help out there, whether it's through the Mental Health Crisis Helpline or one of the Safe Havens. Let's break the silence and start the journey towards better mental health together."

Emily Hackett, Mental Health Crisis Line Service Manager said: *"If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress or if you have concerns regarding someone that you care for, please call us. Our dedicated crisis call handlers are on hand to support you 24 hours a day 7 days a week."*

If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health, don't hesitate to call the Mental Health Crisis Helpline on 0800 915 4644.

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Maintaining business standards in Surrey

22 February 2024



Residents are encouraged to do their research and always look for reputable and recommended tradespeople before

having any work done on their property.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards is pleased to announce a partnership with United Knowledge Ltd to provide its 'Trading Standards Approved', trader's scheme.

The collaboration marks a significant milestone in the efforts to enhance consumer protection, promote fair trading practices, and ensure businesses in both counties adhere to the highest standards of excellence. It will also enable trading standards to support residents who are scammed or targeted by rogue traders by supplying a safer choice.

UKTSA offers a list of local businesses who have each given a commitment to trading fairly.

The scheme aims to support both local businesses and consumers, providing honest traders with a way to be identified and therefore stand out from the crowd.

From February 2024, residents will be able to find a Trading Standards Approved trader, introducing an added sense of confidence with the reputable accreditation.

The scheme is able to include a diverse range of trades and businesses, whether consumers are in search of a trustworthy plumber, pest controller, landscaper, electrician, or any other contractor.

The partnership between Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards and UKTSA is aimed at creating a more transparent and trustworthy marketplace for businesses and consumers. Through the implementation of rigorous standards, and continuous monitoring, both counties will be able to identify and address any potential issues or breaches of trading regulations promptly.

Councillor Kevin Deanus, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Resilience at Surrey County Council said: *"Our Trading Standards team is committed to protecting consumers and supporting legitimate business in Surrey. Honest businesses are also victims of rogue traders when their trade is linked to dishonest practices and their reputations tarnished. This collaboration will strengthen our ability to protect consumers and support businesses in our counties. Together, we can ensure fair and ethical trading practices, enhance consumer confidence, and contribute to the growth and prosperity of our local economies."*

Paula Hines from United Knowledge Ltd said: *"We are pleased to welcome our new partners on-board. We are looking forward to working with Buckinghamshire Council & Surrey County Council and the local business communities to make this scheme a success."*

Steve Ruddy Head of Trading Standards at Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards said: *"Schemes such as this offer additional protection to residents as well as clear procedures for resolving problems, which benefits both residents and businesses. Trading Standards always advises residents to get a range of quotes from reputable traders through trustworthy sources such as the new Trading Standards Approved trader's scheme. The scheme gives people access to a list of reliable traders that have been vetted and approved by to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way."*

Residents who have experienced problems with tradespeople or companies to report it to the **Citizens Advice consumer helpline**. The helpline takes all enquiries on behalf of Trading Standards across England and Wales and will pass your report to the relevant Trading Standards team.

Business operators can visit the **Trading Standards Approved** website to find out more about the registration process and joining fees.

Consumers can search the register [HERE](#) on the UKTSA website

Epsom centre brings hope to youth who need support

22 February 2024



With one of three Surrey centres based in **Epsom** the multi-agency **Hope Service** gets a glowing **Ofsted report**. Published last month the report finds that the Hope Service, provided by Surrey County Council and Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust, 'continues to be an outstanding school' following its previous 'Outstanding' inspection outcome in 2018.

The Hope Service, which is registered as a Pupil Referral Unit, offers a 'Day Programme' with a curriculum comprising education, therapies and activities. This is part of the broader multi-agency **Hope Service offer in Surrey** which supports young people age 11-18 who are experiencing complex mental health, emotional, social and behavioural challenges which cannot be met by one agency alone. The Hope Service works with the young person, their family and wider network to offer support to try and prevent placement breakdown or the need for a psychiatric hospital admission.

In a glowing report, Ofsted inspectors note that ‘pupils flourish at this inspirational school’ due to the ‘nurturing relationships they form with staff as soon as they join’. Inspectors also found that young people receive ‘highly specialist support, in every aspect of learning and development’ helping them to grow in confidence and in turn ‘realise their full potential and aspire to a bright future when they leave school’.

The report also highlights that ‘staff take careful steps to construct an ambitious curriculum for every pupil’, with pupil voice central to this and pupils’ views captured ‘at each stage when planning individual curriculum programmes’.

Inspectors found that the school has a ‘palpable air of serenity’, empowering individuals to have a ‘clear sense of self-identity and autonomy’ and readying them for adulthood. The school also offers a significant amount of expert advice and support to the wider community via their outreach work and parent and carer support and information sessions, with parents and carers crediting the school for ‘giving their child hope for a positive and healthy future’.

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said;

“I’m thrilled to see that this incredible school continues to be recognised as Outstanding by Ofsted. One of the priorities in the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to support children and young people with their mental health, including focusing on access to early, appropriate support to prevent further escalation of need, and supporting the emotional wellbeing of parents and care givers.

“The outcomes the Hope Service achieves for Surrey children are remarkable, with staff being able to provide the support young people need to meet their emotional and mental health needs, while at the same time providing a top quality education delivered with high levels of personalisation, kindness and belief in each young person.

“Young people and their families come into contact with this service at a challenging time in their lives, and its vital that we and partners are able to provide a high quality service upon which they can rely.”

The full inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website: **50234890 (ofsted.gov.uk)**.

You can read more about the Hope Service, including the school offer, assessment and out of hours ‘Extended Hope’ crisis service, and free fortnightly online parent and carer support sessions on a range of topics on the **Hope Service** website.

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Surrey team addicted to changing futures

22 February 2024



A former aircraft engineer has spoken out about how his alcohol addiction threatened to wreck his life.

Steve Saunders, 66, from Pyrford, Woking says that what started as social drinking turned into an all-consuming addiction, which saw both his marriage and career end.

Now he is using his experience to help others and to send out a clear message, that there is always support in Surrey for those with a drug or alcohol addiction.

Steve works with Surrey County Council’s Changing Futures programme on their Bridge the Gap scheme which supports people facing a range of issues including alcohol and drug addiction, domestic abuse and mental health challenges.

“Like most other people I started drinking in my late teens and 20s socially but it was in my 50s when it started to become a big problem,” said Steve, who is a proud father of two grown-up sons.

“I now know that I have an addictive personality and that affects how I see alcohol, and one drink is never enough. My behaviour changed and I was awful to those around me – it ended up ruining my second marriage and saw me retire from my job as an aircraft engineer aged just 53-years-old.

“At my worst I was drinking a bottle of spirits a day, often in secret. You kid yourself that people don’t know what’s going on, but it was out of control. I kept losing my driving licence and I was lucky not to be in prison. When I left my job I nearly drank myself to death.”

The turning point for Steve was when he decided to be honest with his doctor about his drinking, and he went into rehabilitation.

“Going through rehabilitation changed everything,” said Steve. *“I decided I wanted to help others who are facing similar problems and so I became involved in Bridge the Gap to offer my insights into the systems that support people and also to run SMART recovery meetings which are both face-to-face and online.*

“A huge range of people access the service – business owners, housewives and professional people such as doctors and

teachers. All of them have one thing in common – they are looking for help, and we make sure they receive it.”

Until now Bridge the Gap has been run as a pilot scheme by Surrey County Council, funded by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the National Lottery – but now a fundraising drive is being launched to raise the £1.4 million which will be needed for it to continue supporting vulnerable people in Surrey.

Eleven local charities are backing Bridge the Gap and these are Catalyst, Guildford Action, The Hope Hub, Oakleaf, Richmond Fellowship, Rentstart, Your Sanctuary, North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service, South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service, East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services and Surrey Domestic Abuse Partnership.

Steve said: “As well as helping others I also get something from the SMART meetings because it reminds me to be grateful for where I am. Anyone facing a drug or alcohol problem needs to know that there is help out there, and we will support them in turning their life around.”

Keely Glithero, service manager at Catalyst, said Steve’s input into the Bridge the Gap programme is invaluable.

Keely said: “Steve’s rich lived and learned experience in addiction brings a valuable perspective and contribution to how we deliver services. I am truly inspired by his relentless energy for supporting people, and I’m so glad to support and work alongside Steve as a volunteer for Catalyst in the Changing Futures programme.”

A conference is taking place in Surrey later this month when people, like Steve, will use their lived experience to support others, challenge prejudice and empower themselves. The Power of Lived Experience event takes place on Wednesday, January 31 from 10am to 4pm at Dorking Halls. For more information and to reserve your place contact colette.lane@sabp.nhs.uk

Further information:

Changing Futures Bridge the Gap programme **Changing Futures - Bridge the Gap | Healthy Surrey**

Drug and alcohol support in Surrey – **Drugs and alcohol | Healthy Surrey**

Improving Surrey’s rights of way

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council is seeking the views of residents on the county’s Rights of Way to help drive improvements.

The county council is responsible for around 2,164 miles (3,482 km) of paths known as ‘public rights of way’ in both the countryside and urban areas. Accessing these paths is important for residents to enjoy and explore, travel to work or school and for health and wellbeing.

A public right of way is a path that anyone, by law, has the right to use. There are four types:

- Footpaths for walking, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
- Bridleways for walking, horse riding, cycling, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
- Restricted byways for walking, horse riding, cycling, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs and horse-drawn carriages
- Byways for all modes including motorised vehicles.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: “This is a fantastic opportunity for residents to share their views and really shape how we manage and improve our rights of way both in rural and urban areas. Exploring the countryside and being close to nature is so important for our health and wellbeing and also to understand the benefits of the natural environment we are doing our utmost to protect, so we want to support everyone by improving our networks.”

Residents are invited to feedback their views on Surrey’s Rights of Way network, sharing how they use them, their importance, what if anything may prevent residents from using them and how the council can support their needs. All views will help inform the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan which will be produced at the end of 2024.

The survey is open until 10 March 2024 and can be accessed on the **Surrey Says website**.

Image: newlandscorner jon hawkins surrey-hills-photography

Surrey chief moves on after 6 years

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council Chief Executive Joanna Killian is to leave the council in March to take up the role of Chief Executive of the Local Government Association (LGA).

Joanna has been at Surrey for six years and has overseen dramatic transformation of the organisation, in the face of unprecedented challenges.

She will leave Surrey in a robust financial position, and with improved inspection ratings and peer reviews in almost all services.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *“Joanna’s approachable and caring nature, coupled with fierce ambition and sharp knowledge has guided this council through difficult change, tough choices, an unstable economic and political climate, as well as the small matter of a global pandemic - all challenges in which this council has come to the fore, and delivered better outcomes for the residents of Surrey.”*

“She has kept us true to our ambition that no one in Surrey should be left behind, and her leadership has had a hugely positive impact on this county as a place, and its people.”

Joanna Killian said: *“While I’m hugely excited and honoured to be taking up the Chief Executive role at the Local Government Association, it is with a heavy heart that I’m saying goodbye to Surrey.”*

“Surrey is a wonderful county, full of innovation and ambition, and the County Council reflects that, with a great workforce all dedicated to improving people’s lives.”

“Local government plays a vital role in communities up and down the UK, making a real difference every single day. It’s a sector I feel very privileged to work in, and I’m glad to be continuing that journey with the LGA, acting as a strong voice for councils with some big challenges ahead.”

Joanna will leave Surrey County Council on March 6th. Succession arrangements will be announced in due course. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. Representing 315 councils across England and working with councils in Wales, it works to promote local government, supports councils to improve and helps the sector make a difference to people, places and the planet.

Related reports:

[County CEO’s pay rise triggering strikes?](#)

Magic Table for Adults with Dementia

22 February 2024



Residents and staff at Banstead Library celebrated the launch of the award-winning innovation from the Netherlands. The Tovertafel (Dutch for “magic table”), is a ceiling mounted projector that projects light games onto a standard table surface. These games are interactive, immersive games that can be played sitting down by a group of people, they encourage social contact, movement and are both relaxing and fun!

Banstead library staff held an open day last week where members of the public got the chance to see the technology in action and try it for themselves.

The Tovertafel supports people living with dementia as well as adults with learning disabilities. The games and activities

respond to hand and arm movements and are designed to stimulate physical activity and social interaction, inspiring those living with dementia to be more active.

Banstead library was chosen as the location for the Tovertafel as it is part of a working group to help make Banstead a dementia friendly village. The aim is to work with organisations such as Age Concern, care homes, the local Community Link Officer, and Community and Prevention Officer to bring together community workers and organisation who will support and help residents living with dementia, and their carers.

Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities Councillor Denise Turner-Stewart said: “We are delighted to introduce the Tovertafel at Banstead library and offer this vital immersive experience to local residents and their families – it’s a fantastic tool that will be not only be a source of joy and entertainment, but which will also make a valuable difference to the lives of residents with dementia in Surrey.

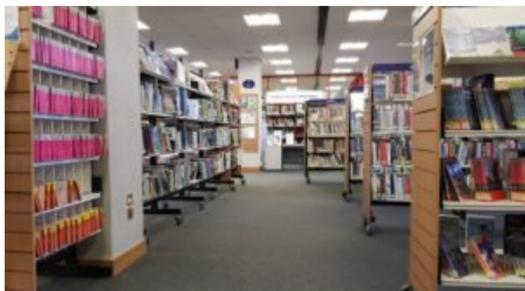
“The installation of the Tovertafel demonstrates Surrey County Council’s commitment to creating a dementia friendly community where no one is left behind, and showcase our libraries are re-imagined spaces that provide so much more to residents than just books.”

To find out more about The Tovertafel, or to register your interest, please contact Banstead Library via banstead.library@surreycc.gov.uk.

Find out more about Dementia support in libraries: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries/health-and-wellbeing/dementia>

RAAC’s latest victim

22 February 2024



Redhill Library has had to close with immediate effect following further investigations of the known reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in the building.

The closure of the library will allow more detailed assessments and immediate safety measures to take place to ensure the building is safe to reopen to residents.

We understand the short notice closure of the library will cause disruption for library users and staff. However, as residents would expect, safety is our top priority.

At present, as the discovery of RAAC in the library building is very recent, further urgent work will need to be undertaken before we can provide any details on mitigation measures or timelines for re-opening.

Further announcements and updates regarding Redhill library will be shared via the **Redhill Library web page**.

Merstham Library and **Reigate Library** remain open for residents.

Redhill Library is a Surrey County Council designated warm space, alternative warm spaces in Redhill can be found **here**.

Draft advice may lead to energy savings

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council has been awarded £745,000 of funding through the Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD) project, to trial new and innovative approaches to tackle residential energy emissions, help residents save money, conserve energy and make homes more energy efficient.

The LEAD project is funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and is one of the UK’s largest energy-based collaborations between a local authority and community groups. The project will run until March 2025 and consist of in-person energy advice and a One Stop Shop.

In-person energy advice will support around 3,000 residents by using thermal imaging surveys, providing basic remedial measures for obvious problems like draughts and heat loss, and signposting to support to help reduce their energy use and bills. Community groups will provide energy surveys to eligible residents which includes those who live in houses with Energy Performance Certificate ratings of D or worse, do not have gas central heating, or may have obstacles to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The One Stop Shop is an online platform which will help residents to create an energy efficiency and retrofit plan for their home, based on building type, budget, and potential grants and reductions in cost of technology. This will be delivered by Surrey Climate Commission.

If 5% of the homes receiving in-person energy advice embark on a deep retrofit with the assistance of the One Stop Shop and any available funding, it is estimated to make cumulative savings of around £320,000 every year for Surrey residents. Alongside this the project will deliver carbon reductions of 1,280t CO₂e every year across the life of the measures installed.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: *“This is a fantastic opportunity to build collaboration between the local authority and Surrey’s community groups, working together to upgrade housing stock and reduce residential emissions. The project is a great example of how implementing a net zero strategy can be hugely beneficial to residents, and actually help them to save money, make their homes healthier and more modern, and simultaneously tackle climate change.*

“Approximately 300,000 homes in Surrey have energy performance ratings of D or worse, meaning that thousands of residents live in homes which are poorly insulated, and liable to damp or mould. Residential energy accounts for over 30% of Surrey’s carbon emissions, a figure which could be significantly lowered through improved energy performance, and reduced energy use.”

For more information about the LEAD project, visit the **Surrey County Council website**. To check eligibility for a free home energy survey, visit the **Zero Carbon Guildford website**.

Epsom’s leader welcomes more power for Surrey County Council

22 February 2024



Following the Chancellor’s announcement in the Autumn Statement regarding the extension of devolution and further County Deals, **Surrey County Council** is engaging in discussions with Government on a Level 2 County Deal.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Chair of Surrey Leaders’ and Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: *“This is a great opportunity for Surrey, which I warmly welcome. The devolution of important functions to the county will, over time, support all our local Councils in their work of delivering for our residents”.*

The proposed County Deal will see the devolution of the following functions to Surrey:

Strategic role in delivering services:

- Host for Government functions best delivered at a strategic level involving more than one local authority e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Opportunity to pool services at a strategic level,
- Opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change and the UK’s Net Zero targets,

Supporting local businesses

- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions including hosting strategic business voice,

Local control of sustainable transport

- Ability to introduce bus franchising,

Investment spending

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund planning and delivery at a strategic level (*w.e.f. April 2025: District and Borough Councils will individually have control until then*)

Giving adults the skills for the labour market

- Devolution of Adult Education functions and the core Adult Education budget
- Providing input into Local Skills Improvement plans

Local control of infrastructure decisions

- Homes England compulsory purchase powers (held concurrently)

The invitation does not involve or require any structural reform of local government or unitarisation of any form, and crucially does not require there to be a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM). The 12 Councils (11 District and Borough Councils and the County Council) retain their sovereignty, which aligns with the partnership work already taking place across the county.

Surrey is well-placed to seize this opportunity and work together to realise the full benefits of a Level 2 devolution deal for our residents, economy, and environment.

In response to the invitation, work will continue with a range of key stakeholders, including the District and Borough Councils, businesses, LEPs, Further Education colleges and Universities, bus companies, health agencies and other key stakeholders to build a consensus around a positive response to the opportunity to secure a devolution deal for Surrey. As part of this, opportunities for potential onward devolution of functions from county council to district/borough councils will also be explored with the District and Borough Councils.

The counties that have been invited include single council areas, that do not have adjacent, neighbouring unitary authorities or 'island' unitary authorities within their boundaries. As such they are not in a position to form Mayoral or County Combined Authorities, which are alternative structures for securing County Deals.

The Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022, set out three levels of devolution (see Annex A below). A 'Level 2' County Deal does not require there to be a Directly Elected Person, and excludes certain powers reserved to Mayoral and Combined Authority areas.

Government officials have expressed an interest in learning about any additional functions local areas would wish to see devolved over the longer term, the Government have made it clear that in the interests of making progress, the Level 2 County Deals being offered will only include the powers outlined above.

Councillor Tim Oliver, Leader, Surrey County Council, said: "I have always been clear in my determination that the residents of Surrey will not be left behind, and this devolution deal with government is a step in the right direction in helping us achieve that ambition.

"Local government and our local communities are best placed to deliver what Surrey needs. I'm pleased that the government is recognising that, with hopefully further devolved powers to local government in due course.

"More control over things like local growth, skills and careers for our young people, lifelong learning provision, the climate agenda, local public transport, and housing, will enable the county council, and partners, to make positive change in Surrey.

"We look forward to working with the government, and with local partners like district and borough councils, businesses, and education providers, to maximise the opportunities this county deal presents for the benefit of all residents.

"This is a positive step in delivering more power to communities."

Surrey set for the first ever Festival of Skills

22 February 2024



Hundreds of young people are set to be fired up about their futures at Surrey's first ever Festival of Skills.

The free one-day careers event will provide local students with the chance to connect with and learn more about some of the county's brightest businesses and training providers.

Up to 1,500 young people from schools and colleges across Surrey are expected to attend the event later this month (23 November 2023) at Sandown Park Racecourse.

The Festival of Skills will feature more than 60 exhibitors, including Samsung, British Airways, Pfizer, Haleon, and BAE Systems.

Public sector institutions will also be represented with the Animal & Plant Health Agency, NHS, armed forces and Surrey Fire & Rescue among those attending.

The event has been organised and funded by Surrey County Council, with support from the Association of Learning Providers Surrey (ALPS) and Surrey Event Professionals.

Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport & Economic Growth, said: *"The first-ever Festival of Skills is set to be a day to remember – providing young people with the chance to rub shoulders with major employers and be inspired about their futures.*

"Such interactions can change people's paths for the rest of their lives, which is why we are delighted to have so many businesses, public bodies and training providers exhibiting at the event.

"Providing opportunities for employers to connect with the county's future workforce is integral to our wider Skills agenda and achieving our mission to ensure No One is Left Behind."

The Festival of Skills is open to young people in education aged 14 to 18. Those attending will have access to inspirational talks and interactive displays, while also learning about potential career opportunities.

Sectors represented include the creative arts, construction, cyber security, health and social care, technology, engineering, public sector, and hospitality.

The event will also host the official launch of the new **Surrey Careers Hub**, which will work with the county's secondary schools, special schools and colleges to ensure every young person can find their best next step.

Schools and colleges are still able to **sign up to the Festival of Skills for the remaining afternoon slots**, but pre-booking is essential.

A small number of exhibitor stands are also available. Employers interested in attending must **register their interest via the Festival of Skills website**.

For further information visit www.surreyfestivalofskills.co.uk.

AI training hub coming to Surrey

22 February 2024



Surrey is set to become home to a high-quality training hub in Artificial Intelligence (AI), a move which could have transformative impacts in the way vulnerable residents engage and access public services.

Government announced last week that the **University of Surrey and the StoryFutures unit at Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) will be the home of a new Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in AI for Digital Media Inclusion**.

The funding will help establish a unique creative industry hub for high-quality training in responsible AI, inclusive design, and creative skills within the county.

In addition to creating 80 PhD posts, the centre will look at using AI to transform digital media into intelligent content that adapts to individual preferences, such as age, language, and sensory and physical abilities.

The ambition is to place Surrey – and the UK as a whole – as a world leader in media inclusion.

Surrey County Council is proud to back the bid and keen to work with the new centre to establish how public services could be made more accessible to its 1.2 million residents.

In a letter of support, Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *"We are excited by the Centre for Doctoral Training's (CDT) proposed approach to responding to the national need for a new community of experts who individually and collectively will deliver resilience for our digitalised Critical National Infrastructure.*

"We recognise and support the CDT's aim to develop the underpinning research, training, community-building, and knowledge exchange, contributing 80 highly skilled and connected resilience experts to the workforce.

"The funding bid and subsequent CDT and associated research and expertise will have a significant positive impact on our organisation's ability to deliver high-quality and sustainable services for all."

Cllr Oliver added the local authority was interested in exploring how new technology could improve the way its most vulnerable residents accessed its services.

There was also potential to look at increasing engagement with businesses, fire prevention, community safety services, and greener futures and net zero.

The Surrey hub will be one of 12 Centres for Doctoral Training in AI across the country that will benefit from £117 million of funding through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

It was **announced at the global AI Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park last week.**

Cllr Oliver added that Surrey County Council has an established track record of working successfully with the county's universities to drive innovation and economic growth.

Last week the local authority's cabinet agreed to investment £3 million to support the establishment of a new **CoSTAR (Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime) satellite studio and incubator space** on the RHUL campus.

The new centre for the creative industries - which will have direct links to the national lab based a short distance away at Pinewood Studios - will create 300 jobs, support 200 businesses and contribute £30 million to the Surrey economy.

The Council was also partner in a **successful bid by Surrey's Guildford Games Cluster and Warwickshire's Silicon Spa for £1.5 million from Research England.**

The funding will support two of the UK's biggest gaming clusters to work with higher education to drive innovation, invest in infrastructure and support growth in the wider regional economy through the Games and Innovation Nexus (GAIN) project.

Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: *"The games industry is one of Surrey's real success stories, showcasing our county and its talented workforce on a global stage.*

"This funding has the potential to take this growing, innovative sector to new heights, creating high-quality jobs and generating inward investment into our communities - both of which would be good news for our residents."

Surrey boosts specialist school places

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council is pleased to announce the creation of 230 new specialist school places for September 2023 for Surrey's children with additional needs and disabilities.

The creation of additional school places has been carried out through the successful delivery of 40 construction projects in schools across Surrey. The building projects included the expansion of existing specialist schools and existing Special Educational Needs (SEN) Units in mainstream schools, the construction of new specialist free schools, and the creation of new SEN Units in mainstream schools.

These projects are a part of Surrey County Council's £260m Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Capital Programme investment to improve the long-term sufficiency of state-maintained specialist educational provision across Surrey, and in turn the experiences of Surrey children. The Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people who have additional needs and disabilities (AND) and require a specialist school placement can have their education needs met closer to home and within state-maintained provision wherever possible. The creation of these new specialist school places will support the Council in delivering this commitment, providing more Surrey young people with additional needs and disabilities with the opportunity to be educated within their own local community.

Surrey County Council's ambitious Capital Programme aims to deliver 2,440 permanent additional specialist school places in Surrey between 2019 - 2026 to create capacity for 5,760 planned places by 2030/31.

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning said: *"The location of these new school places means that Surrey families will have high quality specialist school provision close to where they are, which enables children and young people with additional needs and disabilities to achieve healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives.*

"These additional places are part of the Council's committed investment to increase Surrey's estate to 5,760 places overall by 2030 to improve the long-term sufficiency of state-maintained specialist educational provision that meets the needs of communities across the county now and in the future."

As of the 2023/24 academic year, accommodation for around 917 new specialist school places has been delivered across Surrey at a cost of £41m since the beginning of the programme. As a result of this investment, the planned phasing of places and growth plans agreed with individual schools and Trusts, and where additional places have been commissioned to meet additional local needs, Surrey's state-maintained specialist education estate has been increased from around

3,320 in 2019 - when the Capital Programme started - to around 4,237 places now.

The programme remains on track to complete the remaining 7 projects planned for 2023/24 in the Spring term.

The next phase of Capital delivery in 2024/25 consists of major and medium new build extensions of existing specialist schools which are already in contract, a new specialist free school for autistic children, and two new secondary age SEN Units in mainstream schools for autistic children. Along with the phasing in of additional places from projects delivered in previous years, the programme will create approximately 240 new specialist school places for September 2024. Additional places from these schemes will become available between 2025-2028 in line with growth plans agreed with individual schools. This is because schools need to build their staffing capacity to support the new places.

[Epsom's Pound Lane Primary School is one of the Surrey state schools sharing the 85 new Mainstream SEN Unit places available as of September 2023.]

Related reports:

1000 Surrey children wait for special needs plans

Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

£1.1 million special investment in Epsom school

Preparing for Winter with true grit

22 February 2024



A total of 38 brand new gritting vehicles are now available to help keep Surrey moving during the colder months.

The new vehicles operate more efficiently, have state-of-the art technology on board and produce less carbon emissions. They will grit Surrey's roads before and during severe weather, using the 10,141 tonnes of salt stored at our four Surrey depots. Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

Children from Surrey schools are being invited to name the new fleet with winning entries to be announced later this month.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, *"We're committed to keeping drivers safe here in Surrey and investing in our roads.*

"When temperatures plummet, our highways teams across the county will be ready to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our primary routes using our new, efficient gritters.

"I'm delighted that our school children are getting involved in naming the new gritters and look forward to seeing their suggestions."

Ed Jennings, Lead Operations Manager for Ringway said, *"We are ready and prepared for winter, with a team of experienced gritter drivers - many of whom have delivered the service for over ten years.*

"Our investment in 38 brand new gritters is a demonstration of our commitment to Surrey and enables us to continue our drive towards a greener future. Our Immediate Response Centre will continue to support communities 24/7 and will work closely with the Met Office throughout the season.

Surrey schools fly their green flags

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council has been confirmed with the highest number of schools awarded with a **Green Flag** of any local

authority in England, with its **88 Eco-Schools**, all of which have a Green Flag status - the highest accreditation in the scheme.

Eco-Schools is the largest education programme in the world which helps sustainability become an integral part of school life. Eco-Schools is pupil lead, supports the enrichment of the curriculum and helps unite young people and the wider school community to care more about protecting the environment and making positive changes.

Various projects have been set up across Surrey's schools and have had a positive impact on the environment. Activities that have taken place include:

- Building new ponds to increase biodiversity.
- Creating allotments to grow vegetables.
- Planting trees to encourage more wildlife and improve air quality.
- Running switch off campaigns to save energy.
- Making signs for bins to make sure people use the correct bins, to help increase recycling.
- Building a greenhouse out of plastic bottles to grow plants.
- Following national campaigns such as Walk to School Week.

The projects have engaged over 50,000 pupils and are already reaping benefits which include:

- Saving a total of 648,330kwh of electricity
- Diverting 111,645 tonnes of waste from landfill
- Creating 8,322 (m2) of natural habitat
- 7,400 pupils participating in walking and cycling initiatives.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: *"This project is so important and very close to my heart because we know informing and educating the young generation will pay dividends in the future to protect our environment. I am so proud that Surrey's schools are getting behind the green agenda and are encouraging so many young people to play their part to help tackle climate change. We know it's a joint effort and if everyone plays their part, we really can have a positive impact."*

"It's an amazing achievement to be recognised as the highest performing county and hope this also inspires other Surrey schools to find out more and get involved."

Adam Flint, Eco-Schools England Manager from Eco-Schools said: *"In academic year '22/23, schools in Surrey County Council achieved more Eco-Schools Green Flags than any other county council in the country. When it comes to enabling young people and schools staff to make positive impacts on our planet, the region is exemplary. The Council has supported their schools in various, showing a great commitment to the future of their pupils and placing faith in them to lead action on climate change and work for a better future for everyone. It's a phenomenal achievement."*

More information about Eco-Schools in Surrey, including how to sign up can be found on **here**.

Sign up to the Greener Matters newsletter to keep up to date on progress towards the target of making Surrey net zero by 2050 and find out what you can do to help.

Image credit: rawpixel.com

Painting a rosy picture for recycling

22 February 2024



A pioneering paint re-use shop at the Guildford community recycling centre (CRC), operated on behalf of **Surrey County Council**, launched in 2021 has successfully diverted over 15,500 litres of reusable paint from disposal, raising over £2,000 for **Macmillan Cancer Support** and supporting community projects through the **Surrey Probation Service**.

An estimated 55 million litres of paint are wasted in the UK annually, enough to fill 22 Olympic swimming pools. In autumn 2021, the team at SUEZ, who operate 15 community recycling centres (CRC) on behalf of Surrey County Council, set out to address this problem locally with a circular economy initiative to divert useable paint away from disposal.

To address this issue at the local level, the team at SUEZ opened a paint re-use shop in Guildford where tins of reusable, water-based paint brought to the recycling centre are set aside for residents to have for free, with a suggested donation to Macmillan Cancer Support. In 2023, the team was able to divert even more paint away from disposal by partnering with the Staines Probation Office, providing free paint for use in community projects - up to 200 litres at a time.

Now, nearly two years into operation, the paint shop has diverted over 15,500 litres of paint away from disposal, raised over £2000 for Macmillan and supported more than five community projects through the probation service.

The paint re-use shop offers an eco-friendly alternative to disposal, contributing to charitable causes and supporting meaningful rehabilitation for individuals on probation. The initiative also aligns economic efficiency with environmental responsibility by generating cost savings for Surrey County Council.

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Property and Waste said: "This programme has been a huge success over the last two years and helped divert a significant amount of waste from landfill. To be recognised and shortlisted for a National Recycling Award is great to hear."

Gareth Swain, Regional Manager for SUEZ recycling and recovery UK said: "When we opened the paint re-use shop in late 2021, we set out to reduce the need for disposal and demand for new paint production by transforming waste paint into a community resource. We are incredibly proud of how the project has grown through the partnership with the probation service and we are honoured to be recognized by this year's National Recycling Awards."

Peter Nicholls, Placement Coordinator for the Staines Probation Office of HM Prison & Probation Service said: "The paint donations from SUEZ have made such a difference to all corners of our community, from Scouting to Schools, charities, and homes for vulnerable people in Surrey to name just a few. The projects that we have completed did not have funding for supplies. It is important work and important for our role in rehabilitating and educating people on probation."