EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Stoneleigh library giving away trees

16 November 2026



Surrey County Council is set to give 450 free trees to residents, at three Surrey library giveaway events.

The giveaway is part of the county council's tree strategy which launched in 2019 and saw the council pledge to facilitate the planting of 1.2 million trees, one for every resident in Surrey, by 2030. This will bring the total number of trees planted across Surrey to an impressive 885,172.

The following libraries are giving away trees on a first-come, first-served basis, on **Saturday 21 November 2026:**

- **Woking library** 9.30am to 12 noon*
    - **Ashford library** 9.30am to 12 noon*
    - **Stoneleigh library** 9.30am to 12 noon*

The trees are native, broad-leaved species and come with a stake and guard, ready for planting in your garden. A leaflet containing information on how to plant and care for the tree will be provided with every tree.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, said: "We have been running tree giveaway events since 2022 and know they are popular with residents. I'm pleased to give residents another opportunity to be part of a Surrey legacy while tackling the impact of climate change and improving biodiversity. We are well on our way to achieving our tree planting target, but couldn't have done this without the ongoing support from schools, communities, businesses and residents and volunteers."

Find out about the tree giveaway event and visit the website for details on the Surrey's Tree Strategy.

*The giveaway events will finish at 12 noon at the latest, this may be earlier if the trees have all been allocated.

Surrey County Council

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Related reports:

Free trees for Epsom and Ewell residents – 7 November 2025

Tree planting in Surrey overshoots – 10 October 2026

Surrey tree planting initiative surpasses halfway mark with 768,832 trees – 10 May 2025

Sustaining Epsom and Ewell's trees – 19 June 2023

Surrey to support nature activity for health

16 November 2026



A new countywide programme has been launched to help more Surrey residents improve their health and wellbeing

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through spending time in nature.

Surrey County Council has launched the Surrey Green Health and Wellbeing Programme in partnership with the Community Foundation for Surrey. Backed by a £170,000 investment, the programme will support voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations that provide nature-based activities and services across the county.

The programme which forms part of SCC's work to improve health and wellbeing, strengthen communities and help prevent poor health was officially launched on Wednesday 7 October at an event bringing together organisations from across Surrey to share ideas, make new connections and find out more about the support available through the programme.

Across Surrey, organisations already deliver activities such as community gardening, conservation volunteering, walking groups and outdoor wellbeing sessions. The new programme will help these organisations grow, work together and reach more people. More information on existing services is available on the Healthy Surrey website.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: "We know that spending time in nature can have a positive impact on both physical and mental wellbeing. Across Surrey, local organisations are already doing fantastic work to help people connect with nature and improve their health."

"This new programme will help strengthen those organisations, encourage greater collaboration and ensure more residents can access the benefits that Green Health can provide. By investing in community-led solutions, we're helping to create healthier communities and a stronger, more connected Green Health network across Surrey."

The Community Foundation for Surrey will manage the new Green Health and Wellbeing Grant Fund, providing financial support to eligible VCSE organisations. The programme will also create a Surrey-wide Community of Practice, bringing organisations together through workshops, networking and shared learning opportunities.

Beccy Bowden, Chief Executive of Community Foundation for Surrey, said: "We are delighted to launch this new fund in partnership with Surrey County Council, helping more people across Surrey benefit from the positive impact nature can have on health and wellbeing. Together, we want to support local organisations to extend this important work, helping more residents connect with nature and access the benefits of green and blue spaces."

"By working alongside Surrey County Council and community partners, we can help improve health and wellbeing while strengthening people's connection with the natural environment around them."

The programme includes:

- A dedicated Green Health and Wellbeing Grant Fund for eligible VCSE organisations
- A Surrey-wide Community of Practice for organisations working in green health
- Workshops, networking events and opportunities to share learning
- Collaboration with partners to help shape the future of green health in Surrey

Information about grant funding opportunities and how organisations can get involved will be shared through Surrey County Council and Community Foundation for Surrey channels.

Surrey County Council

Residents invited to help shape the future of East and West Surrey councils

16 November 2026



Residents across Surrey are being invited to have their say on the future priorities of the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils and help shape how services will be delivered from April 2027.

As preparations continue for the launch of the new councils on 1 April 2027, both organisations are developing their long-term plans for the future. These plans will guide the services they provide, the investment they make and the outcomes they want to achieve for local people and communities.

Residents, businesses, community groups and local organisations are being encouraged to share their views on the draft

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strategies and priorities, including what matters most in their local area, what is working well and where improvements are needed.

The new councils will be responsible for a wide range of services that support everyday life, from helping vulnerable children and adults, maintaining roads, supporting local businesses and communities, planning for new homes and infrastructure, protecting the environment and ensuring residents can access the services they need.

- People can take part through separate online surveys for East Surrey and West Surrey between Monday 19 October and midnight on Sunday 15 November.
- A programme of local drop-in events will also take place across Surrey, giving residents the opportunity to ask questions and speak directly with representatives from the new councils.

Further information can be found on the Future Surrey website.

East Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/east-strategy

West Surrey Council surreylgrhub.gov.uk/west-strategy

At a time when councils across the country are facing increasing demand for services, rising costs and changes to government funding, feedback from residents will help ensure future resources are focused on the issues that matter most to local communities.

Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of East Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of East Surrey Council gives us a unique opportunity for a fresh start and new ways of working that better meet the needs of local communities.

“Our vision is for East Surrey to be an inclusive place where people are heard and supported, communities are strong, people are proud of where they live and growth is sustainable. The decisions we make now will help turn that vision into reality.

“The strategy is built around three key priorities: people, place and council. That means helping people access the support, education, housing and opportunities they need, as well as improving the places where people live and work.

“We will be delivering this in a challenging financial environment, with reduced government funding and growing demand for services. That is why a clear and robust delivery plan is so important, helping us focus resources where they can make the biggest difference and ensuring East Surrey remains financially sustainable for the long term.

“Whether your priorities are stronger communities, better access to services, homes that meet local needs, supporting businesses, tackling climate change or improving local neighbourhoods, we want to hear from you. Your feedback will help shape our delivery plan for 2027 to 2032 and ensure East Surrey Council is ready to deliver from day one.”

Councillor Paul Follows, Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority, said: “The creation of West Surrey Council is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a council around the needs of residents, communities and businesses.

“We want West Surrey to be a place where people thrive, communities flourish, opportunity is shared and residents can trust their council to deliver. As we develop the council’s vision and priorities, it is important they reflect what matters most to local people.

“We’re asking residents for their views on our draft ambitions for West Surrey: a place where people can access the homes, opportunities and support they need; where communities and businesses can thrive; and where a trusted, well-run council listens, delivers and makes the best use of residents’ money.

“Like councils across the country, we will face significant financial challenges from day one. That makes it even more important that we understand local priorities and focus our resources where they can have the greatest impact. Whether you complete the survey online or attend one of our events, your views will help shape the future direction of the new council and the services it provides.”

Surrey County Council

Surrey shows true grit

16 November 2026



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Surrey's gritter drivers are now available 24/7 to help keep residents moving during the colder months.

38 state-of-the-art gritting vehicles typically travel over 1,775 miles of the county's busiest routes before and during severe weather, using the 10,000 tonnes of salt stored at four Surrey depots.

Two mini gritters are also on standby to grit roads that are harder to access with larger vehicles. 1,700 grit bins have also been filled across the county at locations that are not on the priority gritting routes but may have:

- difficult road junctions
- slopes
- acute bends
- a large numbers of pedestrians.

Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

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

"When temperatures plummet, our gritter drivers across the county are ready and prepared to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our busiest routes.

"Our Immediate Response Centre will also continue to support communities 24/7 and we will work closely with the Met Office to monitor weather conditions throughout the season."

Residents can report highways issues at tellus.surreycc.gov.uk. More information about gritting is available here.

Surrey County Council

Care planning gap exposed as most Surrey residents aged 60 and over have yet to plan ahead

16 November 2026



Seven in 10 Surrey residents aged 60 and over are concerned about how they would pay for care and support if they needed it, yet only around one in 10 have made specific plans for the future, new research shows.

The YouGov survey, commissioned by Surrey County Council, reveals a gap between concern and preparation, with men appearing to be more complacent than women about future care needs and financial planning.

The findings also show that many people have yet to put a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) in place, despite its importance in helping families manage future decisions.

While awareness of LPAs is high, with 82 per cent saying they fully understand what they are, over half (55 per cent) have not put one in place. An LPA allows a trusted person to make decisions on someone's behalf if they are no longer able to do so themselves. It can cover health and welfare, property and financial affairs, or both.

The findings will help inform the county council's ground-breaking Planning for your Future programme, run in partnership with Age UK Surrey, which supports residents to plan ahead and discuss their wishes with loved ones. 130 people registered for the programme's first dedicated finance and legal event in Leatherhead on 22 September**,** highlighting the demand for trusted information and advice to help residents plan for the future.

The YouGov survey of nearly 300 Surrey residents found that 70 per cent are concerned about how they will finance any future care needs, while even more are worried about losing their independence (81 per cent) or having to rely on others (77 per cent). Women were significantly more likely than men to report concerns about how they will pay for care (78 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

The findings suggest that residents have a realistic understanding of care costs in Surrey, with 68 per cent estimating care homes fees to be more than £1,400 a week, yet this awareness isn't translating into action to prepare for them.

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Just nine per cent of respondents have made any specific plans for their future care and support needs, which could include making financial plans or agreeing arrangements with others, while a further 18 per cent are considering their options or discussing them with family, but have yet to put firm plans in place.

The research comes against a backdrop of continuing wider public misunderstandings about how social care is funded and provided. National research by Ipsos UK for the Health Foundation in 2025 found that 31 per cent of people believe the NHS provides the majority of social care services for older people, and 33 per cent believe that social care services are generally free at the point of need.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "Nobody knows what the future holds but we do know that planning ahead can make a real difference. Our research shows that many people are worried about future care and support needs, yet relatively few have started preparing.

"It was encouraging to see so much interest in our recent finance and legal event, and I hope these findings prompt more people to start thinking about what matters to them and make use of the information and support available. Whether it's understanding the costs involved, having a conversation with loved ones or putting a Lasting Power of Attorney in place, taking some steps now can save a lot of worry later on. We're committed to helping Surrey residents access the information they need to make decisions about the future with confidence."

Jane Finnerty Joint Chair of the Society of Later Life Advisors (SOLLA) said: "It's clear that many of us worry about paying for any future care we might need. Talking to an accredited adviser is a simple first step towards better planning and can offer peace of mind for people and their families."

Liz Dalgetty, Consultant Solicitor representing the Association of Lifetime Lawyers added: "Don't leave it too late. It is never too early to plan ahead with help from a trusted and qualified advisor.

"Hope for the best, plan for the worst, and be prepared for the unexpected. No-one knows what the future will hold. Planning ahead whilst you are well gives you time to understand and think about what is best for you and your family. You will then all have support in place to help you in the future."

Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/surrey/planningforyourfuture to learn more about future free events taking place around Surrey, access more information and download a free planning checklist. More than 5,200 people have already attended sessions.

The council's Care Cost Indicator, which can be found at www.surreycc.gov.uk/carecostindicator, is an online interactive slider to help people estimate the long-term financial costs of social care.

**All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 296 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 26th August – 1st September 2026. The survey was carried out online.*

Surrey County Council

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Related reports

- Calculating the cost of care in Surrey — the council's Care Cost Indicator and the question of paying for future care.
- 2030 vision for the elderly in Surrey — plans to help older residents remain independent and receive care when needed.
- Surrey's challenges with social care — pressures on care services and the choices available to residents.
- Respite for carers in Surrey to increase? — support for families providing care.
- New plan to transform dementia care in Surrey — planning support for people with dementia and their carers.

Plans for East Surrey Council continue to progress

16 November 2026

Plans for the new East Surrey Council continue to move forward as Surrey's local government reorganisation programme progresses with the full support of both central government and Surrey leaders. Key decisions are helping shape a modern, locally focused council that will deliver high-quality services for residents and communities.

The East Surrey Shadow Executive met on 14 September to continue preparations for the launch of the new authority on 1 April 2027. Councillors reviewed progress on the implementation of local government reorganisation and considered a number of important decisions that will help ensure services continue smoothly from Vesting Day.

A key decision at the meeting was to approve Woodhatch Place in Reigate as East Surrey Council's main office from 1 April 2027. This short-term arrangement provides a practical and cost-effective base for the new authority, ensuring it can operate safely and lawfully from day one while longer-term property plans are developed.

Access to council services will remain local and convenient for residents. Existing council offices across East Surrey will

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continue to provide face-to-face support, alongside online and telephone services, giving residents a choice in how they access help and information.

Looking beyond council boundaries, councillors backed proposals for East Surrey and West Surrey to work together on strategic county-wide issues through a proposed Foundational Strategic Authority. Members recognised the potential benefits for transport, housing, economic growth and local funding, while also calling for further details from government on matters including any future visitor levy and Surrey's devolution arrangements.

The meeting also explored how communities could play a greater role in shaping the future council. An early East Surrey Council Strategy was discussed, setting out a vision for an inclusive and sustainable East Surrey where people feel heard, supported and connected. Councillors also considered community-led neighbourhood governance arrangements that would give residents and local organisations more influence over local priorities and services.

Protecting local identity and civic traditions was another important area of discussion. Councillors supported the creation of Charter Trustees in Elmbridge and **Epsom & Ewell** from 1 April 2027, and in Reigate & Banstead if a proposed parish council is not established. These bodies help preserve historic traditions, ceremonial events and local heritage during the transition to the new council structure.

Preparations for Vesting Day also included consideration of the legal agreements needed to create the new councils. These agreements will set out how assets, contracts, responsibilities and financial obligations transfer from Surrey County Council and the district and borough councils to East Surrey and West Surrey, while also establishing how the two authorities will work together on shared services and other arrangements after 1 April 2027.
Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of the East Surrey Shadow Council, said: "The pace of progress demonstrates our determination to make East Surrey Council a success. Each milestone is taking us closer to creating a council that is shaped by local priorities and focused on what matters most to residents.

"We have a real opportunity to create a stronger platform for long-term economic growth, investment and infrastructure improvements across Surrey, this will help us to rethink on how key services, such as SEND, are delivered for people across our communities.

"By combining services at a strategic level and empowering communities to shape local decisions, we can create better outcomes for residents and build a stronger future for East Surrey."

In the months ahead, shadow councillors will use Section 24 powers to review and approve key financial decisions as Surrey prepares for the creation of East Surrey and West Surrey councils. This will help protect the finances of the new councils by ensuring major spending commitments made before 1 April 2027 are in the long-term interests of residents and support a strong start for the new authorities.

Surrey County Council

Reigate to be "initial" HQ for new East Surrey Council

16 November 2026



Woodhatch Place in Reigate has been recommended as the preferred location for East Surrey Council's main office building from 1 April 2027.

If approved by the East Surrey Shadow Executive on 14 September, this essential, short-term decision will help ensure the new council can operate effectively and maintain continuity of services for residents from the day it is established, as well as providing a flexible workspace for staff

The recommendation is intended to give East Surrey Council a suitable base from day one, while allowing time to develop longer-term plans for its offices and buildings across the area.

Continued access to local council services

Residents will continue to be able to visit existing local council offices across East Surrey to enquire about council services and seek support. Online and telephone services will also continue to be available, ensuring residents can access information and support in the way that works for them.

The proposal of Woodhatch as East Surrey's initial headquarters, will not affect how residents access council services in their local communities.

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Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader, East Surrey Shadow Council said: "This recommendation is about making sure East Surrey Council has the right facilities in place to operate effectively from day one and continue delivering services for residents without disruption. Woodhatch Place offers a practical and cost-effective base for the new council's administrative functions, while giving us time to consider longer-term arrangements for council buildings across East Surrey. Importantly, residents will continue to be able to access services locally through existing council offices, as well as online and by telephone."

How was the recommendation made?

A range of council-owned buildings across East Surrey were assessed against several criteria, including accessibility, transport links, office and council chamber capacity, value for money, IT infrastructure and parking provision.

The assessment identified Woodhatch Place as the location best able to meet the operational requirements of the new authority from 1 April 2027.

The recommendation does not determine future staffing structures or individual employee work locations. Any workforce changes will be considered separately after 1 April 2027 and would include staff engagement and consultation where required.

A report detailing proposals for civic functions will be considered at a later date and will include information about proposed meeting locations and times.

Surrey County Council

Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

East Surrey's new council HQ: where is it and how do Epsom residents reach it?

Surrey County Council has confirmed that Woodhatch Place in Reigate will become the headquarters of the new East Surrey Council when the authority takes over local services on 1 April 2027.

The announcement did not, however, include the building's full postal address. It is:

Woodhatch Place
11 Cockshot Hill
Reigate
Surrey
RH2 8EF

Woodhatch Place is not a new council building. Originally constructed as the headquarters of Canon UK, it was purchased by Surrey County Council in 2020 and became the County Council's principal administrative base in 2021. East Surrey Council will therefore inherit an established public-sector headquarters rather than commission a new one.

Epsom and Ewell will form part of the new East Surrey unitary authority. The location of its headquarters will consequently matter to residents, councillors, council employees and anyone required to attend a meeting or appointment in person.

Getting there from Epsom

The most straightforward public-transport journey from Epsom High Street is by bus.

Metrobus route 460 runs from **Epsom Clock Tower** through Tattenham Corner, Tadworth, Walton-on-the-Hill and Lower Kingswood to Reigate. During the main part of a weekday, buses generally leave Epsom hourly.

For example, the current published weekday timetable includes a 460 leaving Epsom Clock Tower at **9.18am** and reaching **Reigate, Bancroft Road at 10.07am** – a scheduled journey of 49 minutes. Other daytime departures are shown at 10.18am, 11.18am, 12.18pm and then hourly through much of the afternoon. Metrobus route 460 timetable

Woodhatch Place is south of Reigate town centre, rather than beside Reigate railway station or the principal town-centre bus stops. A passenger therefore has two main choices after reaching Reigate:

- Walk from the town centre to Woodhatch Place. The distance is approximately one to one-and-a-quarter miles and is likely to take around 20 to 25 minutes, depending upon the precise stopping point and the walker's pace.
- Change in Reigate to a local 430 or 435 bus serving South Park and Woodhatch. One example using the current timetable would be the 9.18am bus from Epsom, arriving at Bancroft Road at 10.07am, followed by a 435 at approximately 10.21am towards South Park and Woodhatch. It reaches the Hornbeam Road area at about 10.31am, followed by a short walk to Woodhatch Place. Metrobus routes 430 and 435

Allowing for the connection and final walk, a public-transport journey from Epsom High Street to the new headquarters is likely to take about **one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes**. Traffic through Tadworth, Reigate and surrounding roads can lengthen the journey.

A rail journey is possible but much less direct. Epsom and Reigate are not joined by a simple direct train service, so

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travelling by rail ordinarily involves changes and, depending upon the route chosen, a further bus or walk from Reigate station. For most passengers starting in Epsom town centre, the 460 is therefore likely to be the more practical option.

Residents should check a journey planner or the operator's live timetable before travelling, particularly once East Surrey Council begins operating, as routes and departure times may change before April 2027.

Although digital and telephone contact will undoubtedly account for most dealings with the new authority, the Reigate headquarters raises a practical question for Epsom and Ewell residents: whether a journey of potentially 90 minutes each way constitutes sufficiently convenient access to the administrative centre of their new council.

Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century

16 November 2026



Residents, researchers and history enthusiasts will soon find it easier than ever to explore Surrey's rich heritage thanks to a major investment in a new collections management system at the Surrey History Centre, by Surrey County Council.

Home to Surrey's archives, Surrey History Centre, with accredited status by The National Archives, cares for an extraordinary collection spanning more than 900 years of history. Its six miles of shelving contain around six million documents, manuscripts and parchment records dating back to the Middle Ages.

The collection includes family and house history records such as parish registers, census returns, civil registration records, poor law records, electoral registers and manorial records. It also houses thousands of historic photographs, postcards, watercolours, engravings and archive films, alongside local history books, directories, newspapers, periodicals and historic maps.

Among its treasured special collections are records and papers connected to notable Surrey figures and businesses, including Lewis Carroll, renowned garden designer Gertrude Jekyll and the Broadwood piano family.

Managing and preserving such an extensive collection is a significant undertaking. The introduction of the new collections management system will transform how people discover and access Surrey's archives, making searches faster, more intuitive and more comprehensive.

The improved online catalogue will be available Monday 14 September and provide an improved user experience, helping users quickly locate the records and documents they need. Documents can then be ordered up from home in advance of their visit to the Surrey History Centre.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: "Our archives tell the story of Surrey and the people who have lived, worked and shaped our county over hundreds of years. By investing in modern technology, we are helping to ensure these invaluable records can continue to be discovered, explored and enjoyed by future generations.

"This is about investing in the future to gain access to the past. The new collections management system will make it easier for residents, family historians and researchers to explore Surrey's rich heritage, with improved search functionality and the ability to request documents before visiting the Surrey History Centre. These improvements will help people plan their research more effectively and make the most of their time with us, while encouraging even more people to discover the fascinating stories held within Surrey's archives."

The investment forms part of Surrey County Council's commitment to preserving the county's heritage while making public services more accessible and user-friendly through digital innovation.

For more information about the Surrey History Centre and its collections, visit: Surrey History Centre – Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council

Image: John Speed – 1610 – Map of Surrey (including Nonsuch Palace) Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc. raremaps.com. public domain

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Surrey help with school uniform costs

16 November 2026



Families experiencing financial hardship across Surrey will receive additional support with the cost of sending their children back to school this year, thanks to funding from Surrey County Council's Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Surrey County Council has awarded over £100k to local children's charity Stripey Stork to expand its already successful School Days scheme, helping more families access essential school items including non-branded uniform items, shoes, trainers, PE kits and school bags. This is additional funding to complement the many donations already made by local families, schools/PTAs and communities, that enable continued support throughout the school year by Stripey Stork.

The funding comes from the £7.1 million UK Government-funded Crisis and Resilience Fund, which is designed to help residents facing immediate financial difficulties and build longer-term resilience programmes. Families will be able to access this support via the Crisis Payments scheme and through existing trusted referral networks including schools, social workers, health visitors, Citizens Advice, domestic abuse services and local charities.

Back-to-school costs can place significant pressure on household budgets, particularly for families already struggling with the rising cost of living. The expanded scheme will ensure that more children can start the new school year with the clothing and equipment they need to learn and thrive.

In 2025, Stripey Stork supported 7,503 children from 4,116 Surrey families via it's Schools Days programme.

This funding will help Stripey Stork fill the gaps in the good quality pre-loved school items donated by the community, ensuring every child receives a complete bundle of everything they need to start the school year. It also provides the infrastructure needed to collect, store, sort, pack and distribute these items efficiently, enabling the charity to support around 8,500 children across Surrey over the next 12 months.

Nicola Dawes Deputy Lieutenant, Chief Executive at Stripey Stork said: "Every child deserves to arrive at school feeling confident, included and ready to learn. Our School Days programme is one of the most valued services we provide because we see the difference it makes, not just to children but to whole families.

"We know from our partners that without this support many families would simply go without essential school items or be forced into debt to buy them. Three quarters told us the support has a significant impact on children's wellbeing and sense of inclusion, while more than 80% said it improves school engagement and attendance. Perhaps most importantly, over 90% said it reduces the stress and worry parents are carrying.

"We're grateful to Surrey County Council for this investment. Combined with the generosity of our local community, who donate good quality pre-loved items each year, this funding means we can make sure thousands more children across Surrey have the practical items they need to attend school with confidence."

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities said: "By investing over £100k through the Crisis and Resilience Fund, we're helping Stripey Stork reach even more families across Surrey with practical support at a time when it is needed most. This partnership is making a tangible difference to children and young people, helping ensure they have the essentials they need to succeed at school while easing the burden on household budgets.

"The Crisis and Resilience Fund is about much more than responding to immediate need. This three-year funding allows us to work with our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise partners to develop long-term support programmes that help residents become more financially resilient, reduce reliance on crisis services and achieve their full potential. Together, we are creating opportunities for people to regain stability, independence and to thrive in the future."

About the Crisis and Resilience Fund

The Crisis and Resilience Fund is a 3 year funded programme funded by the UK Government and currently administered by Surrey County Council. It supports residents facing financial hardship by providing immediate crisis assistance while also helping individuals and families build longer-term resilience and independence. The fund works through partnerships with local voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to deliver targeted support, including food, household essentials, energy assistance, financial advice. Crisis and Resilience Fund – Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council

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In Surrey more people are invited to share their home

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A new partner is taking on Shared Lives in Surrey aiming to welcome more people into the service who can open their homes to adults with support needs and help them live independently and well.

Shared Lives enables adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health needs to live within a supportive household, for short or long-term stays. Similar to fostering, it offers a home environment where people can build life skills and learn to lead active lives in their local communities.

Surrey County Council has appointed an experienced provider to run the service from this month, following a competitive selection process. The provider, the charity Ategi, has more than 30 years' experience running care and support services including Shared Lives schemes in England and Wales.

All current Shared Lives carers and arrangements will continue to be supported, and more people from a wide range of backgrounds are being invited to explore the rewarding opportunity of becoming a Shared Lives carer.

Shared Lives carers receive ongoing support, a weekly fee and training according to their needs. No formal care experience is required – carers simply need a spare room, compassion and the willingness to support an adult with additional needs in their own home.

Around 80 Shared Lives arrangements, both short and long-term, have transferred to Ategi from Surrey Choices, the previous provider. People supported by the service have in recent years achieved life-changing outcomes including passing driving tests, securing meaningful employment, and gaining independence and improved mental wellbeing.

Kate Allen, Ategi's Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted to be bringing Ategi's extensive Shared Lives experience to Surrey and to build on the strong foundations created by Surrey Choices. We know how important continuity is for the people and families who rely on the service, and our priority is to ensure they continue to receive the high-quality, person-centred support they value.

"With more than 30 years' experience delivering Shared Lives – including across London and the South East – we bring extensive Shared Lives experience from across England and Wales, which will help us work alongside local partners to support the service's continued success and future growth. We look forward to working with carers, families and partners across Surrey to enable more people to live independently, build meaningful relationships and play an active role in their communities."

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "Shared Lives has long been an important part of the support we offer in Surrey and I've seen the difference it can make to people's wellbeing and independence, and the rewarding experience it offers carers.

"Our new partnership with Ategi will build on Surrey Choices' foundations, and we've been working hard to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible for everyone involved. We're grateful to our existing Shared Lives carers for the support they provide, and we're encouraging more people to consider coming forward to help adults with additional needs lead fulfilling lives."

Louise Hayes, Operations Director at Surrey Choices, said: "We are incredibly proud of everything our Shared Lives colleagues, carers and the people we support have achieved together. We transfer the Shared Lives scheme with enormous pride in the legacy and the positive impact it has had on so many lives. We pass it on with confidence to Ategi, an experienced provider delivering Shared Lives across multiple counties in the UK, knowing the values of compassionate, person-centred support will continue."

In the words of one family member with experience of Shared Lives, it is "an excellent service enabling adults with additional needs to live as near to independence as they can, with a safety net."

Some Shared Lives placements in Surrey will continue to be provided by Mencap, as they are currently.

Anyone interested in finding out more about becoming a Shared Lives carer, or who has a query about an existing arrangement, should contact Shared Lives Registered Manager Paul Dawson at Ategi on 01494 932 920. More information can be found on Ategi's website: www.ategi.org.uk.

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Surrey County Council Chair opens new Sensory Services Centre in Ashtead

16 November 2026



A new centre designed to support people with sight and hearing loss across Surrey has officially opened in Ashtead, strengthening services for thousands of residents living with sensory impairments.

The centre, operated by Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, was officially opened last week by Councillor Tim Hall MBE, Chair of Surrey County Council, alongside Christine Wilmshurst, Chair of Trustees at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, during a special event attended by staff, volunteers, supporters and local partners.

Located at Bridgehead House, which is owned and was refurbished by Surrey County Council, the new facility will provide an accessible and welcoming hub where residents who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind can access information, advice, specialist support and community activities.

The centre has been designed to enhance the charity's ability to deliver services across the county and meet growing demand, helping people maintain their independence, wellbeing and social connections.

Tim Hall, Chair of Surrey County Council, said: "It was a pleasure to officially open this fantastic new facility. Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey provides invaluable support to residents across the county, and this new centre will strengthen the charity's ability to make a positive difference in the lives of people with sensory impairments and their families.

"We are proud that Surrey County Council has supported this project through the refurbishment of Bridgehead House, creating a modern and accessible space that will benefit residents for many years to come."

Christine Wilmshurst, Chair of Trustees at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, said: "The opening of our new Ashtead centre represents an exciting new chapter for the charity. It is a truly transformational time, and we could not have done it without the leadership, passion, dedication and hard work from everyone involved in the project. We are committed to ensuring that people living with sight and hearing loss have access to the support, resources, and opportunities they need to live independently and confidently.

"This centre will be a place where people can find practical help, social connection, and a strong sense of community."

The opening reflects a shared commitment between Surrey County Council and Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey to improve accessibility, reduce isolation and empower people to live full and independent lives.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, added: "The team at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey do a fantastic job advocating for and supporting people who have sensory needs. As a valued partner delivering services, they make a real difference every day, and we were pleased to work with them to refurbish Bridgehead House and turn it into a centre that will meet the needs of the people they support for many years to come.

"This work is another example of how we are making sure Surrey is fit for the future and passing on a strong legacy of support."

Each year, Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey supports more than 8,500 children and adults through specialist advice, rehabilitation services, assistive technology support, advocacy, social groups and wellbeing programmes.

For more information about Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and the services available at the new Ashtead centre, visit www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

Surrey County Council

Image: Christine and Tim Hall Cutting Ribbon

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Residents invited to help shape New East and West Surrey council brands

16 November 2026



Residents from across Surrey are invited to get involved to help shape the brand identities of the new East and West Surrey councils.

These councils will need to create their own distinct brand identities, to help everyone recognise who is delivering local services from April 2027.

The new brands will be created at no cost by designers working in councils across Surrey. To help inform these designs, residents, businesses, council staff, partners and community groups across Surrey to have a say on the future visual identities of the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils.

This is the first phase of a wider programme of engagement to help shape the new councils.

A survey has been created for people to share their views. This will be available to complete in the 52 libraries across the county to ensure a broad range of voices are heard. We are asking residents to share your views on:

* What makes our area unique?
* What are you most proud of?
* What should your future council's look and feel reflect?

Insights gathered from the survey will be used to help create the new logos and brands for East Surrey and West Surrey Councils. This means that each brand will reflect the distinct views of the people in each area.

Residents have until **3 August** to complete a short survey, more information can be found on https://www.surreylgrhub.gov.uk/your-future-surrey

Councillor Steve Wotton, the Leader of East Surrey Shadow Authority said: "We are committed to making East Surrey a place where people thrive. There is a lot to do, but this is a real opportunity to take a new approach, designing a council that is open, transparent and genuinely focused on delivering outcomes for residents, businesses and communities. Creating a new brand identity for East Surrey is an important step as we move forward. This engagement is about understanding what people like about where they live and what makes their communities unique. I would encourage residents, businesses, partners, colleagues and community groups to take part and help shape a brand that truly reflects East Surrey."

Councillor Paul Follows, the Leader of West Surrey Shadow Authority added: "Our focus remains on creating a council that delivers high-quality services, provides value for money and meets the needs of residents, businesses and communities across west Surrey. This engagement is an opportunity for people across West Surrey to help define how we present ourselves as a new council. We're not asking for views on logos or designs, but on what really matters to our communities – the character, feel and identity of the area. By taking part, residents can shape the new West Surrey brand and ensure this is a people's brand. We are also committed to keeping costs to a minimum, so I am delighted that the new brand will be created in-house, with designers working in all councils."

Surrey County Council

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