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

29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Bags of Confidence in Epsom for cancer survivors

22 February 2024



Epsom-based cancer support charity **Look Good Feel Bette**r is partnering with Epsom **Café Moka** in the Ashley Centre for a pop-up sale of preloved bags on Thursday 29th February 2024 from 11am until 2pm. Funds raised will go towards supporting people facing cancer to build back their self-confidence and improve their overall well-being.

Leigh Beth Stroud, Look Good Feel Better's Community Fundraising Manager, explains: "Our first ever 'Bags of Confidence' pop-up sale is open to everyone and will raise much-needed funds for people undergoing treatment for cancer. Pre-loved, quality handbags will be available to buy, so do come along and have a browse on the day."

This year, Look Good Feel Better celebrates its 30th anniversary. The charity embarked on its journey in 1994 to support people living with cancer and has helped over 200,000 people to date regain their confidence and self-esteem. Look Good Feel Better knows how challenging it can be to process a cancer diagnosis and manage the physical and emotional side effects of cancer treatment.

The charity runs workshops face-to-face and classes virtually to support women, men, and young adults through this time. Services are free and open to anyone facing cancer, and the workshops are led by trained volunteers in the beauty industry to provide practical advice about changes to skin, eyebrows, eyelashes, hair, and nails during treatment, and body confidence.

Ann M, who was recently diagnosed with cancer, attended a workshop and said: "I signed up to a number of the charity's workshops, including the hand and nail care; the headwear, wigs, brows and lashes, and the styling for confidence sessions. And I haven't looked back. The biggest thing was that I felt less alone. Cancer can make you feel very isolated, but here I was surrounded by other people, soaking up the good advice and information. It was just what I needed and I would recommend anyone undergoing treatment for cancer should sign up for a workshop."

If you are interested in hosting your own 'Bags of Confidence' event, the charity will provide you with all the support you need, with a colourful fundraising pack with helpful hints and tips available at www.lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk

Leigh adds: "You might find your favourite designer bag or pick up another hidden gem. 'Bags of Confidence' is a simple and sustainable event where these handbags will go to a new home, while raising funds for the charity. And no bags go to landfill, so it's a win-win situation."

Established 30 years ago, Look Good Feel Better delivers cancer support services in local communities across the UK through a series of face-to-face and online group workshops, along with video tutorials. Its services help people face cancer with confidence, regain their sense of normality, make friends, and most of all look good and feel better. Its vision is to be recognised as one of the UK's leading cancer support charities and the only one dedicated to improving the physical appearance and overall well-being of people living with cancer.

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.

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ISSN 2753-2771

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 hel*p.

"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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Coroner catalogues care failures in diabetic death

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council (SCC) has been accused of not taking its responsibilities seriously after an eighteen-year-old tragically died from diabetes.

Jake Baker, an 18-year-old with a learning disability and type 1 diabetes, died at home following Diabetic Ketoacidosis. He required residential care since the age of eight, under the guardianship of the council. An inquest concluded a catalogue of failures by Surrey County Council and other bodies contributed to Jake's death.

The coroner found Surrey Care Leavers team and Children Services had failed to obtain information about Jake's cognitive ability and his capability of managing his diabetes independently, a Prevention of Future Deaths report published this month reads.

Coroner **Caroline Topping** said: "I am not satisfied that Surrey County Council have undertaken a rigorous review of the circumstances of the death, nor that the risk of future deaths has been averted. The issues surrounding the inadequacy of Jake's pathway plan have not been addressed comprehensively in the last 4 years. Training for personal advisers is not mandatory and is only now being rolled out."

The court was not provided with copies of the training or any protocol to be assured of the adequacy of the training and its implementation.

The coroner said that Jake's death was "avoidable" and was "contributed to by neglect". In September 2018 Jake (then 17) was placed in a full-time residential placement at **Ruskin Mill College**.

At the time of his death, Jake was staying with family for a few days when he became seriously ill from uncontrolled diabetes. Jake's mother and stepfather found him unresponsive. His family previously said "there is nothing that can take away the pain" of losing their son.

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ISSN 2753-2771

The days before his death were the first time he had stayed away from his care facilities for more than two nights in a row, since being placed in the care of Surrey County Council when eight years old, his family's lawyers said.

He was entitled to a personal adviser who had a statutory duty to write a pathway plan for Jake, including consideration of how his health needs were to be met. However, when away from home, no advice was sought from specialist diabetes services to inform the pathway plan and no risk assessment was made for Jake having unsupported contact with his family and managing his diabetes, the coroner's report concludes.

Meetings discussing Jake staying over at his family's house without support were unminuted. The emails which refer to meeting decisions made no reference to any of the dangers inherent in Jake's diabetic condition nor his ability to manage it unsupported. The family were also not given any advice or training on how to keep Jake safe if he became unwell nor any emergency contact numbers.

The coroner added: "The local authority employees held the mistaken belief that if Jake wanted to go home unsupervised once he turned 18 there was nothing they could do to stop him. No capacity assessment was undertaken in relation to Jake's ability to make a decision to go home unsupported. In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths could occur unless action is taken"

Four years on from Jake's death, the coroner found the process of obtaining learning disabilities diagnoses remains opaque and difficult as there is no protocol in relation to this. Vulnerable care leavers are at risk of being denied necessary support due to the confusion and delay teams accessing adult social care assessments.

Jake was assessed not to meet the threshold for SCC Transitions Team because a report containing his original disability diagnosis was lost. Children's Services were unable to obtain an up to date diagnosis. He did not have the support of an adult social work team and this outcome was being challenged when he died.

Overnight from the 28 to the 29 December 2019, Jake developed diabetic ketoacidosis as a result of being hyperglycaemic in the preceding days. He began to vomit and required immediate hospitalisation. On 30 December 2019 the college was notified by his family that he was too ill to travel. The staff who were travelling to collect him were told to return to the college. His family was not told to take him to hospital.

He was last seen alive at 11pm and found dead at 3am on 31 December 2019. If Jake had been admitted to hospital at any time prior to 5pm on the 30 December 2019 he would have been successfully treated."

The family claim that Jake's death was avoidable if he had been admitted to hospital any time before 5pm on December 29. In a statement, the family said: "Losing Jake has been incredibly difficult for our family, especially as he died in our home at what should have been a happy time. We trusted Ruskin Mill Trust with Jake's care, and we have been let down by them in the worst possible way.

"Jake was an enthusiastic and determined young man who always put his mind to things. As a family we did all we could to make sure that Jake was looking after himself and was well taken care of, but those that were put in charge of his care didn't give us the information necessary to ensure Jake's safety"

Clare Curran, SCC Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said: "Our deepest sympathies remain with Jake's family and friends. The services provided to Jake fell short of what he and his family needed to keep him safe, and we are very sorry for our part in that. We have taken a number of actions over the past four years to improve our support for young adults leaving care and we will be responding to the Coroner outlining our action plan to prevent future deaths. While we have already made changes, we know there is still further to go and we will carefully consider the Coroner's concerns as we take our next steps."

Published on 14 February 2024, SCC have up to 56 days to formally respond to the coroner's report and outline the service's action plan.

Dementia nurses coming closer to Epsom

22 February 2024



Dementia UK, the specialist dementia nursing charity, in partnership with Leeds Building Society, is launching free face-to-face 'Closer to Home' clinics to provide life-changing support to families living with dementia in **Epsom**.

The clinics will be held in the **Epsom branch** of Leeds Building Society, bringing emotional and practical support closer to families with dementia through the charity's specialist dementia nurses, known as Admiral Nurses. Dementia UK's Closer to Home clinics will run on 28th and 29th of February and the 5th, 6th and 7th of March 2024.

The face-to-face clinic will offer a safe, comfortable, and private space for families to discuss any aspect of dementia and receive the specialist support of Admiral Nurses. Between June 2021 and December 2023, over 4,000 families have been helped through Dementia UK's 'Closer to Home' clinics, and the charity has partnered with Leeds Building Society to offer in-person support across the United Kingdom since 2022.

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ISSN 2753-2771

Nationwide research conducted by Dementia UK into the impact of dementia revealed that nearly half (47%) of people in the South East of England have been affected by dementia, and 51% of people in the region are worried about how a diagnosis would affect their relationships with family and friends. Only 16% of people in the South East have heard of Dementia UK's specialist Admiral Nurses.

In April 2020, Dementia UK and Leeds Building Society announced a four-year partnership to raise £700,000 to help over 2,500 families with dementia across the UK. As part of this partnership, the innovative 'Closer to Home' project was also launched in June 2021, to improve access to dementia care and support.

The partnership's initial target of £500,000 has now been exceeded. Thanks to this, Dementia UK has been able to develop and deliver virtual appointments with specialist dementia nurses for an even larger number of families and individuals.

Hannah Gardner, Admiral Nurse at Dementia UK, said:

"We're proud to bring our Closer to Home project to Epsom to offer specialist face-to-face clinics in the area. We know the difficulties that families in Epsom and the surrounding area often experience. We know that dementia doesn't just affect the person with the diagnosis: families, friends, and carers are also impacted.

"Dementia is a huge and growing health crisis – someone in the UK develops dementia every three minutes. This means it's more important than ever for us to reach families and offer one on one support from our dementia specialist Admiral Nurses. From worries about memory problems to understanding a dementia diagnosis and how the condition progresses, we will be providing practical and emotional advice on caring for someone who lives with this progressive condition, along with giving advice on financial and legal issues."

Richard Fearon, CEO of Leeds Building Society, said:

"Dementia UK was voted as our charity partner by our members and colleagues, and we are thrilled to have raised over £700,000 for them, exceeding the £500,000 fundraising target we set ourselves at the start of this partnership."

Dementia UK's Closer to Home clinics will take place in Epsom on the 28th and 29th of February and the 5th, 6th and 7th of March 2024.

To book a confidential and in-person appointment with an Admiral Nurse, visit dementiauk.org/closer-to-home

dementiauk.org

Surrey boost for mental health includes Epsom

22 February 2024



Surrey County Council has announced a significant investment of £3.6 million from the Mental Health Investment Fund (MHIF) into 13 innovative, community-focused projects. This allocation follows a previous grant of £530,000 in 2023 to 9 projects. The overarching goal of these initiatives is to bolster emotional well-being, with a dual focus on preventing poor mental health and providing support for those already grappling with mental health challenges.

The MHIF operates in collaboration with Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership.

The 2019 Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy guides the allocation of MHIF funds, emphasizing the reduction of health inequalities and targeting specific groups and neighbourhoods. The MHIF focuses on prevention, dismantling barriers, and empowering individuals to proactively improve their emotional health and well-being.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health, expressed delight in the diverse allocation of the second round of funding. Spread across all 11 districts and boroughs of Surrey, the funds support a range of organizations employing innovative, community-focused approaches to address mental health challenges.

In the table summarizing mental health projects in Surrey, here are the projects targeting Epsom and Ewell and frequently the Court Ward area in Epsom in particular, among other areas in Surrey.

Emerge Advocacy

Supports people aged 10-25 who are in A&E because of self-harm, a suicide attempt or emotional crisis, 7pm – 11pm when many other services are closed, and hospital staff are very busy. The MHIF funding will allow Emerge to expand their post hospital follow up support so that young people and their families do not have to endure long waits for support during their most vulnerable moments. Emerge Advocacy runs Emerge projects in the Royal Surrey, Epsom, Frimley and East Surrey hospitals.

Other projects involving Epsom and Ewell include:

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ISSN 2753-2771

Barnardo's Paediatric Parenting Service

- **Target District:** Court in Epsom
- **Description:** Barnardo's will provide support to parents/carers of children under 6 years old, diagnosed with autism and/or ADHD, in key neighbourhoods, including Court.
- **Funding:** £409,609
- **Duration:** 2.5 years

PAPYRUS: Prevention of Young Suicide

- **Target District:**
  - Year 1: Court in Epsom
- **Description:** PAPYRUS aims to expand its impact in Surrey schools through various initiatives, including direct intervention in specific neighbourhoods.
- **Funding:** £139,834
- **Duration:** 2 years

YMCA: Step Forward

- **Target District:**
  - Epsom and Ewell
  - Hooley, Merstham, Netherne, Tattenham Corner, Preston, Horley Central and South, Redhill West, Wray Common
- **Description:** Step Forward addresses the gap in service provision for young adults with poor mental health, including those in Epsom and Ewell and surrounding districts.
- **Duration:** Not specified in the provided information

These projects aim to provide various forms of support, from inclusive wellbeing coaching to parenting services, suicide prevention, and support for young adults, specifically in the mentioned districts of Epsom, Ewell, and Epsom Court.

A helping hand from the Council

22 February 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a local campaign to tell residents about community support services that offer them, and their loved ones, a helping hand.

The council offers a range of valuable services for those who are elderly or vulnerable. They are run by staff who provide a personal and caring service, and council subsidies mean that costs are kept to a minimum. Services include:

• The Dementia Hub: respite care for people living with memory loss and dementia.

• Meals at Home: tasty, healthy meals delivered to homes in and around Epsom & Ewell, catering for any dietary requirement. The team can even drop off shopping, too.

• Transport from Home: DBS checked drivers help people in Epsom & Ewell, who are unable to use public transport, with door-to-door travel.

• Community Alarm: easy-to-use devices that raise an alarm in an emergency and can even help find a loved one who has become lost whilst away from home.

• The Community & Wellbeing Centre: support hub for the over 55s; a place to relax, make friends, join activities, and feel at home.

Residents will notice information about the services across the borough on council social media accounts including Facebook, Instagram and X, in the council email newsletter, and in local advertising.

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ISSN 2753-2771

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said: “As we become older, or for people with additional needs, living independently can feel challenging. We also know that many of our residents are carers for loved ones who would really benefit from our services.

Our trained teams offer care and support for people who need it most, allowing them to stay independent for longer. We hope this campaign will reach residents who could use a helping hand and encourage them to talk to us to find out how we can help.”

If you or someone you know could use any of these services, please talk to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council today. Call 01372 732000 or visit the website: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/communitysupport

The Dementia Hub, meals at home and shopping service are also available for people who live outside of the borough of Epsom & Ewell.

Local A&Es stretched in the cold snap

22 February 2024



More than a thousand people visited one of St George’s, Epsom and St Helier’s emergency departments (EDs) on Monday, as demand for care soars.

It was the busiest day this winter, placing extreme pressure on services – which only continue to rise.

Demand typically rockets when temperatures plummet – often in the days following a cold snap – and this week has been no exception. More than 100 extra people visited one of the EDs compared to a normal Monday.

There has also been a spike in the number of very poorly people arriving at hospital in recent months, meaning a rise in those requiring specialist and complex care.

Dr Luci Etheridge, Chief Medical Officer for St George’s, said: “Our hospitals are stretched, and we are under extraordinary pressure.

“Our priority is to ensure our sickest and most seriously ill patients – of which there are many – receive the care they need. And while we are doing everything we can to provide that care against a backdrop of pressures, the public can also play a significant part in helping us by using NHS 111 online if they need urgent health advice.”

Dr Beccy Suckling, Chief Medical Officer for Epsom and St Helier, said: “It’s a common misconception that going to an emergency department when it’s not an emergency means you’ll be seen more quickly. You will, in fact, be waiting longer, and could even be redirected for care.

“When it’s not an emergency, NHS 111 online can signpost you to the best place for care. But prevention is just as important – and one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others is by getting vaccinated this winter. It’s not too late to get your flu and Covid jabs, and if your child hasn’t had their MMR vaccine to protect against measles then I’d strongly urge you to look at that, too.”

If you need urgent medical help, NHS 111 online should be the first port of call. This is a 24/7 service that can direct people where to go for care. Pharmacies, meanwhile, provide advice on minor illnesses such as colds, coughs, and earache.

It’s important that people continue to call 999 or go to an emergency department when it is life-threatening.

Vaccines help stop the spread of winter illnesses, as does washing hands regularly with soap and water.

Measles cases continue to rise across the country, and parents are being urged to book their children – including teenagers and young adults – in for their missed measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine at a GP. Measles is a serious illness, with one in five children who get the disease admitted the hospital for treatment.

St Georges, St Helier and Epsom NHS Trust.

Image Wellcome Images CC licence Scene of the catastrophe, at the gate, Chelsea Hospital 1852

Different ways to tackle foul-deeds

22 February 2024

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29th October 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's approach to dog-fouling in its public parks may seem rather tame compared with the nearby Surrey Borough of Spelthorne.

Spelthorne has adopted powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act whereby its parks are made the subject of "Public Space Protection Orders" [PSPO]. Under these orders fixed penalty fines can be imposed on dog walkers who fail to clean up and indeed for walking unready with a "poo-bag".

The order, which makes it an offence to take dogs into certain marked areas with fines of up to £1,000 if it leaves its mess behind, has to be renewed every three years. On Wednesday, January 18 Spelthorne Borough Council's neighbourhood services and enforcement committee did just that.

Despite the notices, dog fouling continues to be an issue with the council receiving around 80 complaints a year. Leader of the council, Councillor Joanne Sexton also pushed for new signage to include scannable QR codes in the hope of making it quicker and easier to report offences – and therefore reduce the amount of dog poo lying on the ground.

Officers told the meeting that catching the antisocial behaviour in the act is extremely difficult given how brief the indiscretions are but said that by reporting it the council could find patterns of behaviour and look to target problem areas – turning up at 5am if that's what the data showed.

The zones cover the council's parks and open spaces with dogs excluded from fenced off areas such as tennis courts. Officers told the meeting: "We would like people to report to us. If we know that a dog goes to the park at 3pm on most days we can put in some patrols to give that person some advice – we won't go in heavy. Our aim is always not to give people fines but to make them compliant with rules and regulations. If people see dogs running around like crazy and frightening their dog they should report it."

Spelthorne Borough Council provides about 550 bins as well as dog waste disposal bags in 50 of its parks and open spaces.

Since Spelthorne imposed the order in 2012 it has issued a total of 11 warnings under the PSPO – 2 for dog fouling, 1 for means to collect (not having a bag), 1 dog in tennis courts, 1 professional dog walker with too many dogs, and 6 directions given to keep a badly behaved dog on a lead.

The authority also issued 3 Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences in the same time frame (all paid).

However, Spelthorne acknowledges that dog fouling (and other dog related issues) are notoriously difficult offences to actually enforce, as unless the dog owner is actually known to the person reporting, or officers happen to be in the right place at the right time, there is often very little to no evidence that allows investigation.

This reality may explain Epsom and Ewell Council's more realistic approach stated on its website:

"What can we all do about dog fouling? Report it and we'll remove it. If you notice dog fouling, let us know by filling in our online form 'Street Cleansing' at the top of this page or calling 01372 732000."

Nevertheless, without the authority of a PSPO it still may be an offence under the Anti Social Behaviour and Policing Act to allow a dog to persistently foul a public area, leading to the possibility of a prosecution and fine.

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.

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ISSN 2753-2771

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.

Image: cc Bruce Matsunaga. Licence details

Council wants to prevent suicides

22 February 2024



Tuesday 16th January Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Community and Well-Being Committee considered local suicides.

In 2019, the Borough Council launched its Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS), recognizing a concerning suicide rate of 10.4 per 100,000 residents from 2016-2018—higher than the Southeast's 9.2. A total of 21 lives were tragically lost. To address this, mental and emotional wellbeing became a priority in the borough's HWBS and subsequent action plan. However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the plan's execution.

Since the HWBS approval in late 2019, the borough has witnessed a spike in suicide rates, reaching 14 per 100,000 residents between 2018-2020—claiming 29 lives, with 19 being male. The Southeast's rate during this period was 10.1 per 100,000. To counteract this alarming trend, the Council proposes an assertive response in the form of a revised Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The increase in suicides is reminiscent of a previous increase observed from 2009 to 2013 during a period of significant financial hardship. Recent changes in the standard of proof used by coroners, shifting from 'beyond reasonable doubt' to 'on the balance of probability,' might impact the recorded number of suicides.

In March 2023, the Council's Health Liaisons Panel supported the development of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP). This plan aligns with Surrey County Council's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2026, emphasizing six priorities for suicide prevention.

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ISSN 2753-2771

The Council's SPAP, rooted in Surrey's broader strategy, aims to:

– Enhance the response to individuals in crisis with suicidal thoughts.

– Foster collaboration with Public Health Surrey County Council, statutory partners, and the community & voluntary sector.

– Collaborate with Public Health Surrey County Council to utilize real-time surveillance data for meaningful and effective SPAPs.

Specifically referencing the Alison Todd Protocol, an assessment tool identifying areas of practice and growth, the SPAP demonstrates the Council's commitment to suicide prevention. The plan, to be led by the Council's Community Development Team, spans from January 2024 to January 2025 before undergoing review.

Cllr Kate Chinn (Labour Court ward) was concerned about Council staff who might not assess the risk of suicide correctly and the effect on them if a resident subsequently died. She was assured that training would be given and support for staff provided in that situation.

The committee adopted the plan unanimously.

Image: Licence details rawpixel.com

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."*

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ISSN 2753-2771

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**

Surrey braces for doctors' strike

22 February 2024



Hospitals and health services across Surrey are bracing themselves for the longest "and most difficult" strike in NHS history. Junior doctors, who make up about half of the medical workforce, will walk out for six consecutive days starting Wednesday, January 3, after negotiations broke down following the Government's offer.

Health chiefs are warning people to expect significant disruption as urgent, emergency, trauma, maternity and critical care are prioritised during the work stoppages over routine and scheduled appointments.

It comes as hospital services are already stretched with the NHS experiencing one of its busiest periods.
In December, Royal Surrey County Hospital issued a plea to only attend in cases of life-threatening situations or serious injury after its accident and emergency department reported its busiest ever day.
Matt Jarratt, chief operating officer at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust said: "Our junior doctors have our full support, whether they choose to participate in industrial action or not. But we know this strike action will put more pressure on frontline services and our staff, who are already working incredibly hard.

"We are again asking members of the public for their support in using services responsibly and appropriately, thereby helping us keep our emergency departments and 999 for those who need them most. We are also asking people to be patient, particularly if services are busier and waits are longer than usual or if outpatient or planned procedures need to be rearranged, as our frontline teams prioritise critical services and work hard to make sure people get the care they need."

The long-running dispute has meant hospital trusts have developed emergency plans to cover disruption but the timing has made this walkout even more challenging.

Dr Charlotte Canniff, joint chief medical officer for Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership and Surrey GP said: "We have well-rehearsed plans in place to manage these periods of disruption, working together across health and care organisations. However, due to the timing, and with this being the longest period of planned industrial action the NHS has ever seen – taking place over six consecutive days – we expect this to be the most difficult period of action yet.

"During the last period of strike action, just before Christmas, at its peak, on December 21 we saw 497 junior doctors from Surrey Heartlands taking part in planned action. With junior doctors making up around half of all doctors, a reduction of this scale has a significant impact on the services our frontline teams can continue to provide – so we do expect significant disruption to routine appointments and planned procedures as we prioritise urgent, emergency, trauma, maternity and critical care for those who need us most.:"

Dr Rob Laurenson and Dr Vivek Trivedi, are the co-chairs of the British Medical Association's junior doctors committee. In a joint statement, they said: "It's incredibly disappointing that we've had to call this strike – no doctor ever wants to have to take industrial action. Junior doctors face the brunt of the decade of underinvestment that has undermined the NHS frontline.

"The record-high waiting list and chronic lack of resource are pushing many talented doctors to the brink; as a profession we are exhausted, disenchanted, and questioning whether we want to stay in the health service at all. Add to this years of pay erosion, and it's no wonder that morale on the frontline has never been lower.

"Patient safety is our top priority at all times, including during strike action, which is why we not only give trusts adequate notice to arrange appropriate cover, but also have an established process with NHS England, which we have successfully used over the previous eight rounds of strike action, to constantly review staffing levels and act

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ISSN 2753-2771

appropriately, including derogating staff back to work when absolutely necessary.

“Of course, these strikes don’t have to happen. We’ve been clear that it is the government that cancelled talks and we would still at this late hour encourage Government to put forward a credible offer so that we can stop this strike and get back to doing what we really want to do – care for patients.”

Junior doctors in England will be taking strike action from 7am on Wednesday January 3 until 7am on Tuesday January 9.

The NHS will prioritise urgent and emergency care as consultants cover for junior doctors, but has said people should continue using urgent medical services as normal.

For minor problems, general practices, community pharmacies, and dentists are not expected to be affected.

Dr Timothy Ho, chief medical officer, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, said: “These strikes come at a time that will cause huge disruption to the NHS, with services already feeling the strain of winter pressure. All health and care partners are working together, and we have drawn up contingency plans but we are concerned as this round of industrial action will see junior doctors on strike for six days.

“We are working closely with partners to ensure we prioritise urgent and emergency care for patients, but we do need the public to continue to support us and use the right health service to meet their needs.

“Routine appointments may be rescheduled. If you have not been contacted by the Trust, we would advise that you attend your appointment as planned, but please continue to check for updates.”

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Surrey doctors to go on strike?

Catalogue of errors – death inquest

22 February 2024



A Woking family has spoken of their “incredibly difficult time” after losing their son saying “there is nothing that can take away the pain”. Their comments came after an inquest concluded a catalogue of failures by Surrey County Council and other bodies contributed to the death of 18-year-old diabetic Jake Baker.

Jake, who also had learning disabilities, died on December 31, 2019, while visiting his family home.
It was the first time he had stayed away from his care facilities for more than two nights in a row, since being placed in the care of the Surrey County Council when eight years old, his family lawyers said.

The teenager arrived home on Christmas Eve, became unwell on December 28 and was found unresponsive on New Year’s Eve by his mother and stepfather, neither of whom had been trained to recognise or seek medical advice for a deterioration in Jake’s diabetes.

According to the family’s lawyers, Coroner Carolyn Topping said Jake’s death was avoidable and, if he had been admitted to hospital any time before 5pm on December 29, he would have been successfully treated.

They added that the coroner said there had been “a systemic failing on the part of Surrey County Council to adequately train and oversee personal advisers about their legal obligations in preparing pathway plans for children leaving care”.

In a statement, the family said: “Losing Jake has been incredibly difficult for our family, especially as he died in our home at what should have been a happy time. We trusted Ruskin Mill Trust with Jake’s care, and we have been let down by them in the worst possible way. Jake was an enthusiastic and determined young man who always put his mind to things. He was happy to help out in the garden or with DIY.

“He had a kind soul and would get very excited when meeting new people. He loved dogs and playing pranks on his brothers and sisters. Jake wanted to be more independent and was keen to learn but to anyone who met him it was clear that he needed help, particularly in handling his diabetes.

“Before Jake turned 18, he had a key worker that we trusted and who he had a great relationship with. We were able to spend time together as a family safely, knowing that Jake was well supported by the staff at Burbank children’s

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ISSN 2753-2771

home. This changed when Jake moved from Burbank to Ruskin Mill College. We were told it would be his road to independence and from this point on we didn't have much contact with the people who were supposed to be supporting Jake. We were never made fully aware of how severely his diabetes could affect him, or how he should be managing it.

"As a family we did all we could to make sure that Jake was looking after himself and was well taken care of, but those that were put in charge of his care didn't give us the information necessary to ensure Jake's safety. There is nothing that can take away the pain of losing Jake, but it is our hope that lessons will be learned from his death so that another tragedy is prevented."

The cause of death was given as diabetic ketoacidosis.

Jake had been living at a residential college run by Ruskin Mill Trust in Stroud, for 15 months.
The trust is a charity that provides specialist education for young people with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

The coroner also said the trust failed to ensure Jake's safety when he went home for contact with his family. Following his death Transform Residential Limited, the body responsible for providing care services to Ruskin Mill Trust, was ordered to pay a total of £22,721.04 at Staines Magistrates' Court, after pleading guilty to causing a resident avoidable harm, the Care Quality Commission said.

Jake had been a resident at Glasshouse College since November 18 2019. Previously he lived at Ruskin Mill College, run by the same provider.

According to the family's lawyers, the coroner said Jake lacked the ability to be wholly independent in managing his diabetes and was not given any information about the dangers for him to have unsupported contact if his blood sugars became imbalanced.

They added that Ms Topping said those involved in making decisions for Jake, from the Surrey Care Leavers team and Children's Services, failed to ensure Jake's safety when he went home for overnight contact from March 2019 and that Ruskin Mill Trust failed to ensure Jake's safety.

Anna Moore, who represented Jake's family, said: "The coroner's detailed investigation and critical findings illustrate a catalogue of failings that led to Jake's death. Jake's family welcome these conclusions and hope that lessons will be learned from his death. What is particularly important is that those authorities entrusted to look after children and support them through their transition to adulthood are doing so properly.

"The evidence heard at the inquest showed that no one with current responsibility for Jake had a clear picture of needs and what support he required. Very worryingly, those at Surrey County Council who were meant to be supporting Jake into his transition to adulthood were not aware of the scope and extent of this important role. This needs to be urgently addressed so that children and young adults, and particularly people like Jake with additional needs, are given the support they need when they turn 18 and beyond."

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning at Surrey County Council, said: "Our deepest sympathies remain with Jake's family and friends at this difficult time. The services provided to Jake fell short of what he and his family needed to keep him safe, and we are very sorry for our part in that. We have taken a number of actions over the past four years to improve our support for young adults leaving care. While we have already made changes, we know there is still further to go and we will carefully consider the coroner's findings as we take our next steps."

Ruskin Mill Trust took over responsibility for residential care from Transform Residential Limited in August 2020. A spokesperson said: "Jake's death was heart-breaking and our thoughts remain with his family. He was well known to our staff and his loss came as a profound shock to everyone here. We deeply regret that in this instance some key measures that should have been in place for his visit home were overlooked. We aim to provide the highest standards of care.

"Since this tragedy occurred, the overnight risk assessment protocol has been fully reviewed and we have taken steps to strengthen practice, policies and procedures to ensure this kind of incident never happens again."

Local hospital plea to use 111 unless urgent

22 February 2024



A spike in very unwell patients has put indescribable pressure on St George's, Epsom, and St Helier's emergency departments – and with Christmas and doctors' strikes on the way, demand could snowball further this winter.

Senior clinicians are warning of severe disruption to NHS services over the coming weeks – and are calling on members of the public to help by going to NHS 111 online when their healthcare need is less urgent.

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ISSN 2753-2771

Some people may think that going to an emergency department – even when it is not an emergency – means they will be seen more quickly. This, however, is not the case.

In reality, because of the high number of severely unwell patients requiring urgent intervention, waiting times to be seen for less severely unwell patients will be significantly longer than usual. Other settings of care will be quicker and easier to access than the hospital ED.'

More than 560 people with winter-related illnesses, many of whom were very unwell, came to the hospital Group's three emergency departments between 4 and 10 December – about 10% of all attendances. Hand-washing is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of bugs like norovirus, and vaccines are good protection against flu and Covid.

Dr Rebecca Suckling, Site Chief Medical Officer at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "Winter has arrived. Our hospitals are under extraordinary pressure, not just because of the numbers coming to our emergency departments, but the sheer volume of very sick people we are seeing.

"We are here for people when they genuinely need us. But on behalf of the nurses, doctors, and everyone else working so hard in our hospitals, I would urge people who are unwell over the Christmas period to consider whether our emergency departments are the best place to come.

Dr Luci Etheridge, Site Chief Medical Officer at St George's Hospital, said: "With further strike action on the way, and Christmas just around the corner, we face a very challenging few weeks. And following a record-breaking summer, it barely feels like we've come up for air.

"The best Christmas present the public could give our hardworking staff this year is using NHS services wisely and going to NHS 111 online when their health need is less urgent – helping us to prioritise the very poorly people who are coming through our doors."

Last month, 219 people going to St George's, Epsom and St Helier emergency departments were redirected to other services more appropriate for their healthcare need, including GP surgeries, pharmacies, and urgent treatment centres.

When someone has an urgent healthcare need that isn't an emergency, NHS 111 online – a 24/7 service – should be the first port of call, as this can direct where to go. Pharmacists are highly skilled and can provide advice on minor health concerns from skin rashes to earaches and flu. Many local pharmacies stay open late, and no appointment is needed. Some will be open over Christmas.

During strikes, people should continue to attend GP appointments, unless contacted and told otherwise. When it's an emergency or life-threatening, people should always ring 999 or go to an emergency department.

People can also take steps to stay safe and well this winter, including getting vaccinated for flu and Covid through their local NHS vaccination service and washing hands regularly with soap and water to stop the spread of illnesses.

With many people more vulnerable to colder weather – including those aged 65 and over, babies and young children, and those with long-term conditions – take the time to look in on vulnerable family, friends, and neighbours.

A lot of older and vulnerable people have been affected by winter illnesses – and as they often need to spend longer in hospital, additional demand has been placed on NHS services.

People who use medication should ensure they collect prescriptions well in advance of the bank holidays.

Junior doctors strikes take place from 7am on Wednesday 20 December to 7am on Friday 23 December, and from 7am on Wednesday 3 January to 7am on Tuesday 9 January.

St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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

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ISSN 2753-2771

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**

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