

Staying in bed problems for local NHS

10 November 2023



Hospitals in **Epsom And St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** unable to discharge almost two thirds of patients. This is according to a national data collection exercise conducted by the BBC. There are variations in the data collection criteria between different NHS Trusts.

In Epsom And St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust between July 1 2022 and June 30 2023 on an average night 64.1% patients who had been identified as ready to be discharged that day were still occupying a bed at midnight.

This is 6.3 percentage points higher than the average figure for trusts across England (57.8%).

On 2 days 100% of patients classed as “no longer meeting the criteria” to be in hospital were still occupying beds at midnight. This means that on 1% of days for which data was provided, not a single patient was discharged.

The day when the most patients were left in hospital was Saturday October 22 2022 when 99 who could have been discharged were still in the hospital at the end of the day.

The proportion of patients ready to be discharged but still occupying beds was worst on Sundays, when 72.9% of patients identified as ready to be discharged that day were still occupying a bed at midnight.

A **spokesperson** for **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** said:

“We do all we can to discharge medically-fit patients swiftly and safely, but unfortunately there are sometimes delays. Our hospitals are facing significant pressures and we are working hard to ease these – from providing more beds this winter, to continuing to work with our partners to find solutions.”

The Trust added further background information:

There are a number of reasons why patients who are medically fit remain in hospital. These could include, but are not limited to, needing a care package in place before returning home; waiting for a bed or space in another facility or nursing home; or needing additional therapy, such as physio, before being mobile enough to leave hospital.

We have received £4.5m of national funding to provide more beds in our hospitals this winter

Improving hospital discharge is one of our priorities. We have discharge wards to free up bed space, and employ people in dedicated roles that focus on discharging patients and improving patient flow earlier on in the day

We work with our community partners, Sutton Health and Care and Surrey Downs Health and Care. This includes identifying patients for their virtual wards, which allow patients to get the care they need at home safely and conveniently, rather than being in hospital.

We also work closely with other partners, such as mental health and social care providers, to ensure people are being cared for in the most appropriate setting

Photo by RDNE Stock project

Surrey Borough flushed with pride

10 November 2023



Toilets in Waverley have reclaimed their thrones as some of the country’s best bogs after inspectors released their results from unannounced lavatory visits.

Two watering closets in Waverley Borough Council’s parks have achieved Loo of the Year status.

Broadwater Park, in Farncombe and Frensham Great Pond and Common have been awarded platinum status – honours they held from 2017 and 2019 respectively. The Waverley washrooms were the only in Surrey to have secured nominations.

Councillor Steve Williams, Waverley Borough Council’s portfolio holder for environment and sustainability, said: “Clean, well-managed toilets are very important for those visiting our sites and I would like to say a big thank you to our contractors and staff who do such a great job keeping them up to such a high standard.”

According to Loo of the Year organisers, the awards encourage the highest possible standards in all ‘away from home’ washrooms and inspectors make unannounced visits to toilets across the UK and Ireland to judge them.

Acceptable toilets are graded silver, gold, platinum or diamond and are held up against a number of criteria, including décor, cleanliness, hand washing equipment and accessibility.

The awards have run since 1987 and are considered the ‘washroom standard’ with overall winners across the 61 categories announced on Thursday, January 18.

Related reports:

The Cost of Spending a Penny: a review of Epsom and Ewell’s public toilet provision.

Bourne Hall Ewell celebrates LGBTQ+

10 November 2023



Mental health is still quite a taboo subject and breaking down those barriers to talking openly remains quite a challenge but one group in Surrey is hoping to get those conversations going this weekend. **End Stigma Surrey** is a campaign to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health. As well as providing support, training, and raising awareness, End Stigma Surrey are launching an event called **Love Without Labels** to celebrate and support LGBTQ+ people in the community. It's a free event of music and presentation hosted by drag queen **Tiana Biscuit** and a headline performance by **Surrey Rainbow Choir**, Surrey's only dedicated LGBTQ+ choir, all taking place this Saturday 4th November afternoon at **Bourne Hall in Ewell**.

More details on Epsom and Ewell Times event page [HERE](#)

Organiser **Joe Stroud** said "isolation can be a problem for a lot of people who may be intimidated to approach groups and organisations trying to look for support. We're hoping this event will give people confidence and boost our collective sense of community spirit".

The aim is to create an environment to spotlight LGBTQ+ groups in the community and celebrate this with an uplifting day of pop tunes from David Bowie, Madonna, Billie Eilish and more. A strong focus on the day will be the wellbeing and the mental health of our community with the relaunch of Outline, an LGBTQ+ listening service, but it's also a great opportunity to meet people and socialise with several Surrey community groups who are taking part.

Oscar Hoyle from Blossom LGBT says, "we are predominantly focused on empowering LGBTQ+ people to live meaningful empowered lives where they don't face discrimination or the fear of discrimination".

End Stigma Surrey is commissioned by Surrey County Council Public Health and delivered by three well established not for profit organisations in Surrey, Catalyst, Mary Frances Trust (both of whom run Community Connections in Surrey) and Acting Out Productions which provides drama-based training and awareness raising.

Love Without Labels, a day of celebration and community in support of LGBTQ+ Mental Health! This project is part-funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supported by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. Free tickets can be applied for [here](#)



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lgbtq-celebration-and-wellbeing-day-tickets-738080788507?aff=oddtidcreator>

You are invited to commemorate the 9000 souls in Epsom's forgotten cemetery

10 November 2023



9000 patients of Epsom's cluster of now closed psychiatric hospitals were buried between 1899 and 1955 in a now abandoned Cemetery. The Friends of Horton Cemetery are writing their life stories and seeking to reclaim the five neglected acres from a property speculator.

The **Horton Cemetery** is located between Horton Lane and Hook Road, **Epsom**.

On **10th October 2023** from 1.00pm The **Mayor Cllr Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) and Mayoress of **Epsom and Ewell** will lead councillors, Aldermen of the Borough and the public in commemorating the lives of the 9000.

Baroness Sheila Hollins, a Patron of the Friends of Horton Cemetery will be in attendance and Alderman **Alan Carlson** will address the gathering. **St Josephs Primary** School pupils will sing and others will recite poetry. A "committal prayer" will be spoken on behalf of faith leaders of Epsom and Ewell. The ceremony will end with a Scots Piper leading the gathering to the former Horton Chapel that is now the Horton Arts Centre in Haven Way.

This venue will be host to further performances and speeches and the opening of a **Memorial Garden** in tribute to the 9000.

900 ceramic flowers painted by many people across the Borough over the last year will be planted.

This is the culmination of a year long project of the Friends of Horton Cemetery known as "**Out of Sight, Out of Mind**", led by the charity's history consultant, **Dr Alana Harris**, local resident and Reader in Modern British Social, Cultural and Gender History at **Kings College**. The Project is supported by **Historic England**.

Lionel Blackman, founder and director of The Friends of Horton Cemetery, said "All are welcome to this significant event taking place on **World Mental Health Day**. Demonstrating widespread public support for the return of the Horton Cemetery for the public and relatives of the deceased, is essential in correcting an unconscionable decision of the NHS in 1983 to sell the land to a property speculator".

If you intend to attend the event you are requested to complete this simple online RSVP form.

If you are attending you should read the advice of The Friends of Horton Cemetery on the ground conditions and lengths of walks involved. Click [HERE](#).

Related reports:

[Friends of Horton Cemetery workshop](#)

[Another Horton Cemetery Life Story](#)

[Grace Jones - Horton Cemetery Stories](#)

Emily Elizabeth Campbell – Horton Cemetery Stories

Bringing to life the dead in Epsom's forgotten cemetery – Historic England awards local charity.

Council: Horton CPO debate shelved

Local NHS Doctors and Consultants striking

10 November 2023



As tensions mount within the UK healthcare sector, doctors across the country are gearing up for strike action. The looming industrial action has sent ripples of concern through the local Epsom healthcare system and the wider public, sparking a heated debate about the grievances motivating these medical professionals to take such measures.

In a week that promises to bring a fresh wave of challenges, hospitals across the UK brace themselves as a new round of strikes is set to commence. On Wednesday, consultants and junior doctors are set to unite in a day of industrial action, marking the first instance of such joint protest. The impact of this combined strike action is expected to weigh heavily on healthcare facilities, with St George's, **Epsom** and St Helier hospitals particularly vulnerable, having recently grappled with the added strain of a heatwave.

Amid this turbulence, healthcare authorities call upon the public to exercise discretion in their use of NHS services. It's emphasized that individuals should continue to seek medical care during emergencies or when they have scheduled appointments.

Dr. **Richard Jennings**, the Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, **Epsom**, and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, acknowledges the upcoming challenges: "While we do everything we can to minimize the impact strikes have on our patients, there is no denying this week will be very challenging for us. There's been little respite this year, with several rounds of industrial action already taking place, not to mention our emergency departments becoming busier with the hotter weather. And with further industrial action planned for this autumn, and winter on the way, we would expect these extreme pressures to continue for some time."

The joint strike is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, with consultants and junior doctors ensuring emergency care remains available. However, elective surgeries and non-emergency appointments will be rescheduled. On Tuesday, September 19, some consultants will also strike while providing Christmas Day cover, and junior doctors will stage a complete walkout on Thursday, September 21, and Friday, September 22.

During this period, the public is urged to use NHS services judiciously to ensure that the most critical cases receive timely attention. It's essential to bear in mind that visiting an emergency department for non-life-threatening issues may not result in quicker service.

Dr. Jennings advises, "We must prioritize our sickest and most seriously ill patients. That means if you attend our emergency departments and it's not life-threatening, you may be redirected to a more appropriate service. You can help us by using NHS 111 online, which is a 24/7 service and can direct you to where you need to go when your healthcare need is less urgent. But when it's an emergency or life-threatening, you should always call 999 or visit an emergency department."

Numerous inpatient and outpatient appointments have already been rescheduled due to this year's strike action, with more disruptions expected this time around. However, those with scheduled appointments are encouraged to attend unless notified otherwise. Alternative options, such as GP surgeries and pharmacies, remain largely unaffected by the strikes and can assist with common ailments like tonsillitis, coughs, colds, and earaches. Minor injuries like sprains and strains can be managed at home, or a pharmacist can provide guidance on the appropriate treatment.

For individuals in need of mental health support during a crisis in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, or Wandsworth, the South West London 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line is available at 0800 028 8000. More information can be found at <https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/patients-carers/crisis-support/mental-health-support-line>. Similarly, in Surrey and North East Hampshire, support is accessible 24/7 for adults, young people, and children by calling 0800 915 4644. Additional information can be found at <https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services>.

The dates for strike action are as follows:

- Consultants: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Tuesday, September 19, to 8 am on Thursday, September 21.
- Junior doctors: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Wednesday, September 20; full walkout from 7 am on Thursday, September 21, to 7 am on Saturday, September 23.
- Both consultants and junior doctors will be striking on Monday, October 2, Tuesday, October 3, and Wednesday, October 4, providing Christmas Day cover.

To understand the situation better, The Epsom and Ewell Times has delved into the arguments put forth by UK doctors explaining their reasons for considering a strike.

1. **Pay and Working Conditions:** One of the primary concerns voiced by doctors is the state of their pay and working conditions. Many doctors argue that their wages have not kept pace with the cost of living, and they face long working hours that often stretch them to the limit. Some argue that these conditions not only affect their own well-being but also put patient safety at risk.
2. **Staff Shortages:** The shortage of medical staff, including doctors and nurses, is another major concern. Doctors are often working in understaffed hospitals and clinics, leading to burnout and suboptimal patient care. They argue that without adequate staffing levels, patient safety is compromised, and they are unable to provide the level of care they would like to deliver.
3. **Patient Care:** Doctors frequently emphasize their commitment to providing high-quality patient care. However, they argue that the current conditions make it increasingly challenging to maintain the level of care patients deserve. Overcrowded emergency rooms, lengthy waiting times, and limited resources all contribute to a deteriorating quality of care.
4. **Mental Health:** The toll on doctors' mental health is a pressing issue. The immense stress and emotional burden of their work can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Doctors argue that addressing these mental health challenges is essential to ensure they can continue to provide effective care to patients.
5. **NHS Funding:** Doctors are also concerned about the overall funding of the National Health Service (NHS). They argue that the NHS needs increased funding to address the aforementioned issues adequately. Insufficient funding, they claim, hampers efforts to improve working conditions and patient care.
6. **Privatization Concerns:** Some doctors express worries about the gradual privatization of healthcare services in the UK. They fear that privatization could lead to a two-tier healthcare system, where those who can afford private care receive better services, leaving the public healthcare system further strained.

The doctors' strike is viewed by many as a last resort, taken only after exhausting negotiations with government officials and healthcare administrators. While the potential strike has raised concerns about the impact on patients, it also serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by medical professionals in the UK.

As the situation continues to develop, the nation watches closely, hoping for a resolution that can address the doctors' concerns while safeguarding the healthcare needs of the population. The outcome of this ongoing debate will undoubtedly have significant implications for the future of healthcare in the United Kingdom.

Epsom fair for health and well-being

10 November 2023



On Saturday, September 23rd, the local charity **Age Concern Epsom & Ewell** will be hosting a Health & Wellbeing Fair at **Rosebery Park** in **Epsom**. The event is scheduled to run from 10 am to 3 pm and is open to attendees of all ages.

This community event aims to provide a diverse range of informative talks and demonstrations by local groups, charities, and small businesses, all focused on promoting and encouraging a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle. Visitors can expect insights from health practitioners on topics such as maintaining good posture, enhancing flexibility, foot care, the benefits of deep breathing, and mindfulness, among others.

The Rainbow Leisure Centre will be showcasing their activities suitable for individuals of all ages, while children can engage in rhythmic fun with Drumz Epsom. A fascinating tree trail will also be a part of the day's offerings, providing an opportunity for attendees to learn intriguing facts about the local park's trees. A small entry fee of £3 is required for the tree trail, and participants are encouraged to uncover hidden clues to unveil a special surprise, with all entries receiving a unique prize.

Further details about the tree trail can be found at <https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/roseberyparktreetrail>.

Throughout the event, there will be informative displays and talks by organizations such as the Epsom & Ewell Countryside Team, Epsom Common Association, Sustainable Epsom, and Ewell, and the Surrey Wildflowering Trust. Attendees can also take advantage of free bike checks, courtesy of Dr. Bike, available from 10 am to 3 pm.

The fair will also feature acclaimed author **Sarah Tucker**, who will deliver talks on the art of storytelling and the benefits of writing. Those interested in reducing waste can bring their own containers to shop with The Floating Refillery, a vendor offering a variety of quality household goods, cereals, and spices. Paper bags will also be available for use.

For those looking to satisfy their taste buds, Bake 88 will be on hand with delicious and healthy light bites, including award-winning bagels. Attendees can even bring a jam jar to create a sourdough starter to take home and nurture.

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell will be sharing information about the services they offer for the older generation within the borough. They will also discuss the various volunteering opportunities available and how both clients and volunteers can benefit from giving a little of their time each week.

The organizers are excited to present this event, which promises a wide array of engaging activities and informative sessions. They hope that attendees will take a leisurely stroll to explore the offerings and show their support for this inaugural event. It is anticipated that attendees will leave with newfound knowledge and perhaps even be inspired to try something new.

Healthy future for Epsom's restored White House

10 November 2023



The **White House**, located at 16 Waterloo Road, **Epsom**, nestled between Blacks Burgers and Nandos, is a Grade II listed building that dates back to the early 1700s. Recently, it has undergone a beautiful restoration in preparation for an exciting new phase in its rich history.



The new owner has successfully preserved the building's charm and character, while modernizing its internal features to create comfortable and contemporary treatment and therapy spaces. The White House is transformed into a Health and Wellness Centre, where professionals with various skills can utilize rooms once occupied by two historically significant individuals, as confirmed by the plaque on the building's front, visible from the pathway.

Around 1800, Prince George and Mrs. Fitzherbert resided in the same building now known as The White House. However, the question arises: What became of Princess Caroline, the woman Prince George married just five years earlier, and why is her name absent from the plaque?

While King George III led a scandal-free life, the same cannot be said for his son, Prince George, who lived an extravagant lifestyle characterized by heavy drinking and entertaining mistresses. Burdened by mounting debts, Prince George sought financial assistance from his father, who agreed to help him under the condition that Prince George marry his cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick.



Although Prince George had previously secretly married the twice-widowed Maria Anne Fitzherbert, this marriage was invalid because King George III had not consented to it. On April 8, 1795, Prince George married Princess Caroline at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace. However, the couple proved incompatible despite Caroline giving birth to Princess Charlotte, George's only legitimate child, just nine months after their wedding ceremony.

Upon their first meeting, Prince George called for a glass of brandy, while Princess Caroline commented on how much thinner and more handsome George appeared in the portrait she had seen of him. Prince George found his wife unattractive and "unhygienic" and could not bear to have intimate relations with her (he ensured he was drunk on the night of their wedding). Princess Caroline, on the other hand, was beloved by the public, who generally despised her husband, "the Prince of Pleasure," due to his continuous overindulgence and accumulating debts.

On January 29, 1820, George ascended to the throne as King of the United Kingdom and Hanover, with Caroline becoming Queen Consort in name. George sought a divorce from Caroline but couldn't obtain one due to the weak evidence against her. This was partly because Caroline was held in high regard by the public, who viewed George's conduct as immoral.

Caroline was barred from attending King George IV's coronation on July 19, 1821, and subsequently fell ill in London. Tragically, she passed away three weeks after the coronation she had not been allowed to attend. Her funeral procession moved slowly through London en route to Brunswick, where she was laid to rest. This allowed George to continue his romantic attachment to Maria Fitzherbert and entertain other mistresses.



The brass medallion, which I purchased a few years ago at **Oxfam in Epsom High Street**, likely belonged to one of Queen Caroline's supporters before her death. It resembles a miniature portrait, much like the one of Prince George shown above. "Caroline Queen of England" is inscribed around the perimeter of the medallion, featuring a bust of King George IV's lawful wife.

The brass medallion serves as a poignant reminder of how poorly Queen Caroline was treated by her husband, King George IV, and underscores the ongoing need to ensure that women from all cultures and walks of life are shown respect and treated fairly in today's modern society.

Plea ahead of doctors' strikes round 5

10 November 2023



The number of postponed appointments on strike days has now topped 10,000 at one hospital group - and with a fresh wave of industrial action on the horizon, that figure is set to rise further.

Junior doctors at St George's, **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals** and Health Group will join colleagues across the country on strike from **7am on Friday until 7am on Tuesday**.

It is the fifth time they have done so this year and - coupled with a consultants' strike last month - has resulted in 10,051 appointments, procedures, and operations being rescheduled to ensure emergency care can be prioritised.

The **British Medical Association** explains the reasons for the strikes: “While workload and waiting lists are at record highs, junior doctors’ pay has been cut by more than a quarter since 2008/9. Junior doctors and their patients need change now.

A crippling cost-of-living crisis, burnout and well below inflation pay rises are driving hard working doctors out of their profession, at a time when we need them more than ever.

In 2022, junior doctors were offered an insulting and well below inflation pay rise of 2%.

No-one can be expected to stay in a high pressured job where your earnings are being eroded year on year. That’s why we are calling on the Government for full pay restoration.”

This makes it all the more important that people who do have an appointment continue to attend, unless they have been asked not to. Patients whose appointments have been rescheduled will be contacted directly.

Dr **Luci Etheridge**, Chief Medical Officer for St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: “Our message remains the same as it always has: if you need care, please continue to come forward. That means if you have an appointment and you haven’t heard from us you should still come in, and if it’s life-threatening you should visit an emergency department or call 999.

“But if you have an appointment and you can no longer make it, please let us know so our frontline doctors and nurses can use their time more effectively to treat other patients and work to reduce our waiting lists.”

The hospital group saw extraordinary demand earlier this summer – including the busiest day ever in its emergency departments and a busier-than-usual June.

NHS 111 online should always be the first port of call when you have a health need that’s not an emergency, as it will direct you to the best place to get help for your symptoms.

Pharmacies, meanwhile, can offer advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, and aches and pains. Some pharmacies will be open at weekends, and you can find your nearest one here: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

In a life-threatening emergency, you should always call 999 or go to an emergency department.

Dr **Beccy Suckling**, Chief Medical Officer for **Epsom and St Helier** University Hospitals NHS Trust, said: “Earlier this summer it was very busy, and more recently we saw an increase in very unwell people coming to hospital. This, as you would expect, has put a strain on our services.

“We always prioritise our sickest and most seriously ill patients – and that means that those coming to our emergency departments when it is not as urgent will experience longer waits, and may be redirected elsewhere. Please help us when it is not an emergency by using NHS 111 online first.”

If you need mental health support in a crisis, and live in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton or Wandsworth you can call South West London’s 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line on 0800 028 8000. There’s more information about this service here: <https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/patients-carers/crisis-support/mental-health-support-line>

For adults, young people, and children in Surrey and North East Hampshire, 24-hour support is available by calling: 0800 915 4644. There’s more information here: <https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services>

Epsom’s child-play hobbled by e-coli

10 November 2023



The popular adventure park off Horton Lane in Epsom known as **Hobbledown** has temporarily closed. This follows reports by the UK Health and Security Agency that three children who had visited the park had developed symptoms consistent with STEC (Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli)

Most E. coli strains do not cause disease, naturally living in the gut, but virulent strains can cause gastroenteritis, urinary tract infections, neonatal meningitis and other conditions.

Nick De Candole, the owner, published a statement on the business’s website as follows:

“We have been informed by health authorities of a very small number of cases of an E. coli infection in individuals who recently visited the Park. After learning of this we immediately and voluntarily closed the Park as a precaution.

We are in close contact with Epsom & Ewell District Council Environmental Health team and also the UK Health Security Agency and co-operating fully with both on their respective investigations.

I have written to everyone who visited between 11 and 27 July to inform them of the situation and included with this a letter from the UKHSA with further information and guidance.

We are offering those who have booked to visit while we’re closed options to reschedule or a full refund, plus 50% off next visit.

I can assure everyone that the wellbeing of visitors to Hobbledown is our absolute priority and we do everything in our power to keep guests safe. We look forward to welcoming everyone back soon.”

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council advises “The symptoms of STEC , which include diarrhoea and stomach cramps, usually resolve themselves over a few days, but can occasionally lead to more serious outcomes. If you or someone in your family are showing symptoms of STEC, including bloody diarrhoea, and have visited the farm since 12 July, please contact NHS 111.”

Personal injury adviser Claire Glasgow of law firm Field Fisher explains why E.coli must be taken seriously. “Several children involved in past claims for damages for negligent exposure to the E.Coli O157 bacteria subsequently developed HUS (haemolytic uraemic syndrome). HUS can lead to very serious complications including high blood pressure, heart failure, kidney failure, diabetes, seizures, neurological damages, coma, and, in severe cases, brain damage.

“An additional concern for the families involved is the uncertainty of the impact of the infection on their children as they grow up. At the very least, they face regular and ongoing hospital tests and live under the stress of potential long-term health problems.”

Less disability by independent living in Surrey

10 November 2023



Purpose-built housing to support people with learning disabilities or autism to lead active and fulfilling lives in the community has been given the go-ahead at three Surrey sites.

Backed by investment of £24million, the three developments – planned for Horley, Byfleet and Cobham – will between them provide housing for 44 residents who will be supported to gain independence and daily living skills.

Planning permission has been granted for the three sites and with Morgan Sindall Construction now lined up to build them, construction is expected to get underway early next year.

The three supported independent living developments – at the site of the former Manor School in Byfleet, the former Coveham Hostel in Cobham and the former Horley Library – are expected to be ready in 2025 for tenants to move in.

The county council is aiming to reduce reliance on traditional residential care for residents with learning disabilities or autism, or both, and is also considering other potential locations for supported independent living. As well as earmarking sites on its own land, the council is working with independent care providers to further boost available specialist housing.

Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, said: *"With a building contractor and planning approvals now secured, we've reached a significant milestone on our way to developing the first three of our planned new housing schemes for people with support needs so they can enjoy a better quality of life."*

"With support from trained staff, residents will be able to take control, make choices in their everyday lives, access more opportunities and play an active part in their communities, whether through volunteering, paid work or other activity of their choosing."

Guy Hannell, Area Director for Morgan Sindall Construction in the Southern Home Counties, said: *"We're looking forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with Surrey County Council by delivering this batch of three supported independent living developments. Having recently completed several education projects alongside the county council, I know we share a strong commitment to sustainability and achieving high-quality environments that enhance local communities. This is illustrated by the use of our digital carbon assessment tool Carbonica, which allows us to carefully analyse a project's carbon emissions and ensure that we're creating an efficient building design that will provide accessible, futureproof spaces."*

"Not only will we be bringing our experience of delivering award-winning residential developments in the South East to this project, but the innovation and insights gained from creating these facilities will inform Surrey's future programme of supported independent living housing."

Architects' images show how the three housing developments could look. They will be homely rather than institutional and include shared spaces such as landscaped gardens. Support workers will provide care and support tailored to people's needs.

Each development will comprise self-contained one-bedroom apartments. Two developments, in Horley and Byfleet, will also include, for those who would prefer a group living environment, five-bedroom shared houses. Tenants will be able to make choices about their living arrangements.

The accommodation is part of a wider Surrey County Council programme to enable older people and others with care and support needs to live independently in the community knowing that care is close at hand. It includes:

- **Extra care housing** – plans for 725 new homes across a number of Surrey sites which will give older people the freedom and independence of their own front door and the reassurance that care is on hand if they need it
- **New short breaks accommodation** – two new purpose-built short breaks centres to give adults with learning disabilities or autism, or both, a change from their daily routine and their families a break from their caring roles
- **Mental health needs** – new supported independent living accommodation for people with mental health needs which for some would be a permanent base and for others a shorter stay, to avoid a hospital admission or until they recover