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Epsom Hospital braces for strikes amid winter pressures

13 November 2025



Further strike action by resident doctors – formerly known as junior doctors – is set to add strain to NHS services just as winter illnesses begin to rise. The British Medical Association (BMA) has confirmed walkouts from 7am on Friday 14 November until 7am on Wednesday 19 November in what will be the latest round of industrial action in a long-running dispute with the Government over pay and working conditions. Hundreds of medics across St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group could join the five-day stoppage. The Trust says services are already under pressure from rising flu cases, which have climbed earlier than expected this year. Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer, warned of disruption ahead and said hospitals are "always very busy at this time of year" and are experiencing "significant pressure" due to the combined impact of seasonal illness and the upcoming walkouts. He said consultant doctors and other staff will work extra shifts "to keep patients safe", but appointments may still need to be rescheduled to safeguard care for emergency and critically ill patients.

Local impact so far

During the previous round of resident-doctor strikes in July, 144 elective procedures and 1,084 outpatient appointments were rescheduled across the Group. On an average strike day, 211 resident doctors were recorded absent across the Trust's sites. The public will be contacted directly if their appointment needs to be rearranged, and the Trust emphasises that any appointment not specifically cancelled should be attended as normal. Emergency departments remain open for life-threatening conditions.

Why doctors say they are striking

The BMA has repeatedly argued that resident-doctor pay has been eroded by more than a quarter in real terms since 2008. Representatives say pay restoration is essential both to retain doctors within the NHS and to halt a pattern of experienced staff leaving for better-paid roles abroad. Doctors' leaders also say the dispute is about patient safety: they claim chronic understaffing means resident doctors are covering too many gaps in rotas, working excessive hours, and taking on responsibilities that stretch beyond their training. The BMA says that improving pay and working conditions would reduce burnout and stabilise the workforce, ultimately shortening waiting lists. The organisation has also expressed frustration that talks with Government have repeatedly stalled, arguing that below-inflation pay offers fall far short of resolving the dispute.

Government position

Ministers have previously said that the level of pay demanded by the BMA is unaffordable in the current economic climate and would divert funds from frontline services. The Government maintains that it has accepted independent pay review body recommendations and has urged doctors to return to negotiations without pre-conditions. Officials also argue that strike action adds further pressure to already stretched NHS services and risks longer delays for patients waiting for operations and specialist appointments.

Advice for patients this week

The Trust is urging the public to continue using NHS services responsibly. NHS 111 online should be the first port of call for non-emergencies, pharmacies can advise on minor illnesses, and GP services are unaffected by industrial action. With flu infections rising, eligible residents are being encouraged to get vaccinated without delay, and people are asked to check in on vulnerable friends and neighbours. Dr Jennings emphasised that anyone with a life-threatening condition must still attend A&E or call 999.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Doctors' strike to hit Epsom Hospital

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Epsom Hospital workers to strike for equality?

Surrey braces for doctors' strike

Epsom and Ewell 5th least obese 10 year olds in the UK

13 November 2025



Year six schoolchildren in Surrey have some of the lowest obesity rates in the country, with Mole Valley leading the way. The figures were published as part of the Government's National Child Measurement Programme, which covers mainstream state-maintained schools. Children in Year 6 are aged 10 to 11 and the data is based on the address of the child rather than their school.

Mole Valley, at 9.7 per cent, was the only borough in the country where fewer than one in 10 children were classed as obese. Three boroughs, Sandwell and Wolverhampton in the West Midlands and Knowlsey in the North West had rates above 30 per cent.

The complete top ten was:

- Mole Valley – 9.7 per cent
- St Albans – 12.0 per cent
- Richmond upon Thames – 12.1 per cent
- Cambridge – 12.7 per cent
- Epsom & Ewell – 12.8 per cent
- Elmbridge – 13.1 per cent
- Waverley – 13.1 per cent
- South Hams -13.1 per cent
- Uttlesford -13.2 per cent
- Guildford – 13.6 per cent

The remaining Surrey boroughs had the following obesity rates among year six children:

- Surrey Heath – 14.5 per cent
- Woking – 15.2 per cent
- Reigate & Banstead – 15.7 per cent
- Tandridge – 16.7 per cent
- Runnymede – 16.9 per cent
- Spelthorne – 18.2 per cent

Councillor Nick Wright, Mole Valley District Council cabinet member for leisure and community assets, said one of their priorities was to support residents to live healthy and fulfilling lives. He said: "These childhood obesity figures, which shine such a positive light on Mole Valley, are very encouraging for parents, carers and young people who live in our district. For our part in contributing towards these low obesity rates, we are proud of the work we do and the initiatives we provide which can only help participating children be healthier and more active. Examples include our popular free summer holiday activities programme, most recently run this past summer, and the wide range of indoor activities – such as the kids swim for a pound offer – available at Dorking Sports Centre and Leatherhead Leisure Centre, both run on our behalf by Better."

"Our sports club access scheme also provides up to £250 per eligible young person to cover all, or part, of a sports club membership and free taster session at that specific club. "The Mole Valley parkrun and junior parkrun initiatives that we helped to establish also continue to go from strength to strength, most recently highlighted by the junior park celebrating

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its sixth anniversary. “The funding opportunities we provide, for example our neighbourhood fund, are available for sports clubs or other youth projects to apply for money to help improve existing and build new facilities which young people can benefit from.”

“Our commitment to improving our already impressive range of play facilities, including playgrounds and skate parks, across Mole Valley will always be a high priority for us, and a decision due to be taken by cabinet later this month could see several million pounds of Community Infrastructure Levy funding become available for a major parks and recreation ground enhancement programme.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Epsom Hospital braces for flu spike

13 November 2025



Hospitals serving Epsom, St Helier and St George’s are warning of a potentially severe flu season as national data reveals the number of deaths linked to the virus in England more than doubled last winter.

Figures from the UK Health Security Agency show 7,757 flu-related deaths were recorded in 2024–25, compared with 3,555 the previous year. Child deaths rose from 34 to 53 — a 56 per cent increase — while fewer people took up the offer of a flu vaccination.

Last winter, local hospitals faced intense pressure from flu alongside RSV, Covid and norovirus outbreaks, which closed wards and stretched Emergency Departments to capacity. With flu cases now rising again after the school half-term, health leaders fear a repeat.

Chief Nursing Officer for St George’s, Epsom and St Helier hospitals, Elaine Clancy, urged residents to act now. “Last flu season was particularly nasty and we’re very concerned that this year could be even worse – we’re preparing for a spike of flu onto our wards,” she said. “We see people dying every year from flu and sadly thousands more will likely this year. I strongly recommend booking your jab now, as it takes up to 14 days to fully kick in.”

Local mother Amy Clare, from Sutton, knows how dangerous flu can be. Her five-week-old son Jonah was rushed to Epsom Hospital’s Emergency Department with the virus in December 2022.

“What started as a fever quickly escalated,” said Amy. “When the doctor told us we’d be spending Christmas in hospital, I was devastated. But he was in the best place to get better. The care we received from the moment we walked into A&E was fantastic – the staff immediately knew something wasn’t right and were with us every step of the way.”

Jonah was discharged the day after Christmas but continued to receive daily treatment until the New Year. “The care Jonah received saved his life,” said Amy.

Pregnant women are strongly advised to have the flu jab at any stage of pregnancy. It protects both mother and baby, but uptake remains low — only around one in three expectant mothers in England were vaccinated last year.

Those eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination include:
– everyone aged 65 and over
– people under 65 with long-term health conditions such as diabetes or heart problems
– children aged two and three, and all primary school children
– some secondary school pupils (Years 7 to 11)
– residents in care homes
– carers and those receiving carer’s allowance
– people living with someone who has a weakened immune system
– frontline health and social care workers

People can book or amend their flu vaccination appointment online: Book, change or cancel a free NHS flu vaccination at a pharmacy – NHS.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom Hospital’s support for bereaved mum of baby

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A Tadworth mother whose baby died tragically from a rare infection aged only eight days has praised the nurses and midwives who supported her family during “the darkest time in our lives”.

Jodie Picknett gave birth to baby George at Epsom Hospital in April 2023. Shortly afterwards, he returned to hospital to be treated for jaundice but became suddenly very unwell and lethargic. At just seven days old, he was admitted to the Special Care Baby Unit.

That night George deteriorated, and despite the determined efforts of the neonatal nurses, he sadly passed away. A post-mortem later revealed that he had contracted a severe enterovirus — a condition usually mild for most people but which can prove deadly for newborns.

For Jodie and her family, the care and guidance of Specialist Bereavement Midwife Lydia Baker and the Maternity Bereavement Team at Epsom Hospital were a vital source of strength. The team liaised with the coroner and post-mortem services and connected the family with funeral directors experienced in compassionate bereavement care.

Jodie, 37, said: “Lydia supported us through every step – from looking after George and making practical arrangements to simply being there when we needed her. Her compassion and understanding made the hardest moments that little bit more bearable.”

Thanks to funding from Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity, Lydia and her team can provide detailed 3D ‘memory castings’ for bereaved families. The casts capture each tiny feature of a baby’s hands and feet, offering parents a lasting, tangible connection. Previously, families received only basic prints, but the charity’s support now enables the team to create intricate castings from the twenty-sixth week of pregnancy onwards.

Lydia said: “When a baby dies, families don’t have a lifetime of memories, so creating something tangible in that moment is vital.”

Jodie is now fundraising for the hospital charity so this work can continue. She is inviting people to donate ribbons that will form a memorial display at their local church, with proceeds supporting more bereaved families.

“After George died, the bereavement team helped guide us through the darkest time in our lives with empathy and respect,” Jodie said. “By fundraising, we hope to help Lydia and her team continue their vital work, ensuring more families receive the same compassionate, specialist care. Our ribbon display is a small gesture, but it offers a space for others to remember their babies too. It’s a way to say: your baby mattered, and they are not forgotten.”

For Jodie and her husband Ben, 41, Epsom Hospital holds special meaning. Their daughter Alice was born there in August 2021 and their third child, Lucy, in May 2025.

Jodie added: “We think about our son every day – he is part of everything we do. We will never get to see George take his first steps, say his first words, or start school. That loss is felt every day. So being able to say his name and honour his memory publicly is incredibly important to us.”

Molly Simpson, Head of Charity and Fundraising at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity, said: “Losing a baby is devastating for any family and we are very proud to support the teams who help them through their grief. We’re grateful to Jodie and her husband Ben for sharing such a personal story and know it will inspire others to give what they can – your generosity will mean our exceptional teams can continue to support bereaved parents when they need it most.”

Jodie is sharing her story during Baby Loss Awareness Week, which offers a space for anyone affected by pregnancy and baby loss to share their experiences.

Donations can be made via Jodie and Ben’s JustGiving page.

St George’s, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group

Photo: George with mum Jodie and sister Alice

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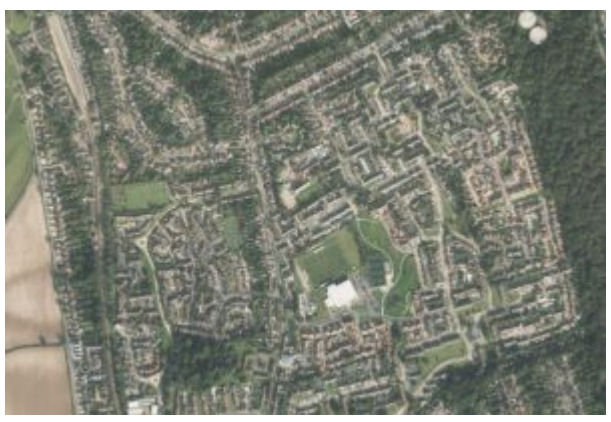
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Surrey inequality report challenges ‘leafy county’ myth

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The idea that Surrey is all leafy lanes, golf courses and big houses is a myth, according to a new report. Despite being a prosperous area of the country, the county still has thousands of residents struggling with inequality, isolation and poverty.

The report, *Understanding Inequality in Surrey*, lays bare the scale of the challenge. It found that residents from Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Roma and Gypsy/Traveller communities are far more likely to live in poverty, overcrowded housing and poor health. Gypsy and Irish Traveller residents experience the worst health among working-age people, and Bangladeshi-origin residents experience the worst health among over-65s.

The study also found that, while unemployment is rising more generally, racial minority groups are more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to White British residents. Even degree-holders from minority backgrounds are still less likely to get into senior jobs or management positions than their white counterparts.

Cllr Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, said: “We’re in a very changing world at the moment. There is a lot going on politically in our society and people are feeling quite fragile in places. Especially when we’re looking at equality, diversity and inclusion, there are people out there who are feeling very alone at the moment. We do have people that are living on the poverty line, we do have from different races [and] different ethnicities that aren’t feeling part of these communities who are feeling alone – as everywhere else in the country. The most urgent action we need to do as a council, and as individuals, is to make sure that we identify where those people are and we have wraparound support for people to make sure they aren’t feeling alone or feeling scared in their own home. And they do know the majority of us respect and love them, and want them to be part of our community and our county.”

The fresh report comes after a 2023 peer review which praised Surrey County Council for improving its culture but also found it lacked a real understanding of how inequality shows up in local communities, prompting this study.

Cllr Robert Hughes added: “I think the image of Surrey being a county of golf courses, wealthy people and pretty villages are a small part of what Surrey is in reality.”

The county boasts around 120 golf clubs – many of which are world class – alongside million-pound mansions, outstanding private schools and leafy green countryside. Yet the report exposed how 20,000 children are growing up in poverty, disabled residents are far less likely to find work, and young people with additional needs and disabilities are four times as likely to have experienced mental ill health compared to the wider population. Women are also hit harder by the cost of living, with the gender pay gap in Surrey reaching a staggering 21 per cent, well above the national average, according to the study.

Officers told a Resources and Performance Select Committee on October 2 that the study will help to alert council departments to how these disadvantages are often linked to an exacerbated socio-economic disadvantage. The new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework aims to bring councils, charities and communities together to make sure support actually reaches the people who need it. It looks at everything from jobs and housing to health, education and digital access.

Local groups have already started using the data to apply for funding and shape projects – a sign, councillors say, that the work is already making a difference. The data will be used to make services easier to access, tackle inequality in schools and workplaces, and build stronger communities.

Council officers admit the financial squeeze is real, but argue investing now will save money long-term. The idea is that better support means fewer people reaching crisis point and more residents able to thrive. The next stage is running focus groups with young people, disabled residents and minority communities to make sure the priorities match lived experience.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Aerial view of one of Surrey’s less well of wards – Tattenham and Preston Hawe

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Defibrillators delivered by drone?

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A groundbreaking project testing how drones could be integrated into the UK's 999 emergency response system to deliver defibrillators to out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients has been launched by the **University of Surrey**, **Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex**, and the **South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb)**.

Funded by the **National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)**, the 16-month initiative will explore how drones can rapidly deliver Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) to the scene of an emergency — potentially saving lives where every second counts.

The research will take place in two phases. The first will simulate 999 call handling, Air Traffic Control coordination, ambulance dispatch, and drone operations to develop and refine delivery procedures. The second will involve interviews with out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survivors, family members, emergency responders and members of the public to assess perceptions of drone technology, ease of use, and any concerns.

Dr Scott Munro, Lecturer in Paramedic Practice at the University of Surrey and project co-lead, said:

"This research is the first step towards integrating drone technology into our emergency response systems. Our ultimate goal is to develop and test the procedures needed to seamlessly introduce drone delivery of AEDs into the 999-emergency system."

Professor Kevin Munro, Director of the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit Programme, added:

"Using drones to deliver defibrillators could help emergency teams reach patients faster, improve survival after cardiac arrest, and bring cutting-edge technology directly to the NHS frontline."

Dr Craig Mortimer, Research Manager at SECAmb, said:

"Rapid intervention is vital in managing out-of-hospital cardiac arrests. Integrating this technology into future healthcare systems represents real progress in strengthening the chain of survival and giving patients the best chance of a positive outcome."

With UK survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest currently below 10%, the research aims to tackle one of the biggest challenges in emergency care: getting a defibrillator to the patient in time.

About NIHR
The **National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)** is the UK's largest funder of health and social care research. It invests in high-quality studies that benefit the NHS, public health and social care, supports researchers and facilities, and partners with patients and communities to improve outcomes both in the UK and globally.

Surrey University

Reducing food waste nationally and in Epsom and Ewell

13 November 2025

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A growing number of major UK supermarket chains are removing ‘best before’ dates from many fresh fruit and vegetable products in an effort to reduce food waste.

Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Marks & Spencer, Waitrose and Co-op have each begun phasing out the labels on selected produce such as apples, potatoes, citrus and salad vegetables. The move follows guidance from the government-backed Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), which says that scrapping date labels from uncut fruit and vegetables could prevent thousands of tonnes of perfectly edible food from being thrown away every year.

WRAP research has shown that many households confuse ‘best before’ dates, which indicate when food is at its best quality, with ‘use by’ dates, which mark when food may no longer be safe to eat. As a result, millions of items are discarded while still fit for consumption.

‘Use by’ dates remain compulsory on foods that pose a higher safety risk, such as meat, dairy and ready meals. These indicate the final day on which food can be safely eaten, cooked or frozen. By contrast, ‘best before’ dates are about quality, not safety, and appear mostly on products such as bread, rice, tins and dried goods.

Marks & Spencer has removed best before dates from about 85 per cent of its fresh produce, while Waitrose has dropped them from nearly 500 lines. Some retailers are instead using small printed codes visible to staff for stock rotation and freshness checks.

Food safety expert Dr Richard Anderson of High Speed Training said that while ‘use by’ dates should always be observed, ‘best before’ guidance can be treated more flexibly. “Best before dates are an indication of quality rather than safety. You can still eat food after its best before date, but its flavour and texture may not be as good as before the date,” he said.

WRAP encourages consumers to rely more on sight, smell and touch to judge whether fruit and vegetables remain good to eat. The organisation says there is no legal requirement in the UK to label uncut produce with a ‘best before’ date.

According to WRAP, the average UK household wastes the equivalent of eight meals a week, with 4.5 million tonnes of edible food thrown away annually. The removal of best before dates is part of a wider drive across the food retail sector to tackle avoidable waste and reduce environmental impact.

Some critics warn, however, that removing dates altogether may cause confusion for some shoppers or make them more cautious, leading to continued waste. Others say the change puts greater responsibility on consumers to decide what is still edible.

The UK government’s food waste reduction roadmap aims to halve national food waste by 2030 in line with UN sustainability goals. Industry groups say supermarket labelling reforms are a practical step towards achieving that target.

In Surrey, FareShare Sussex & Surrey plays a key role in reconnecting surplus food with those who need it. The charity rescues safe, in-date food from farms, retailers and producers and redistributes it to charities, community groups, food banks, pantries and other support services. In 2024, FareShare opened a new depot in Surrey to handle more fresh, chilled and frozen food for redistribution across the region.

Locally, Epsom & Ewell Foodbank, part of Good Company Surrey and the Trussell Trust network, distributed almost 8,000 emergency food parcels last year to people in crisis. The network serves Epsom, Ewell, Banstead, Leatherhead and Tadworth through a voucher referral system and provides three days of nutritionally balanced food to those referred. It operates from local church halls and community centres, with donation points in major supermarkets and strong support from volunteers.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council also promotes “Help with Food” schemes, directing residents to emergency support and a community pantry in Epsom that offers fresh fruit, vegetables and store cupboard items for a small weekly subscription.

Jonathan Lees, Good Company’s Managing Director and Founder told the Epsom and Ewell Times: ‘At Good Company, both our food provision projects, Foodbanks and Pantries, are very grateful for the food surplus we receive from local supermarkets. These donations ensure there is variety in our offer and are a very welcome addition to the ambient food donations. We offer the food on a help yourself basis to people that use our projects ensuring that there is some for all. If dates were removed, then we would need to look at how we used the food under appropriate guidance and of course less waste would mean we could have less to offer people in need.’

As supermarkets adapt their labelling to cut national food waste, the efforts of local redistribution organisations such as FareShare Sussex & Surrey and Epsom & Ewell Foodbank remain vital in ensuring surplus food finds its way to those who need it most.

Sam Jones – Reporter

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Image courtesy High Speed Training

Get paid for falling over in Surrey study

13 November 2025



With 219,000 fall-related emergency hospital admissions among people aged 65 and over in England in 2023/24, a new trial at the University of Surrey is exploring how smart flooring could help prevent serious injuries by cushioning falls – potentially easing pressure on the NHS and reshaping the design of hospitals, care homes and even private homes.

In the ongoing study, participants wear reflective body markers that are tracked by infrared cameras, allowing researchers to measure how different floor materials – ranging from soft to hard – affect a person's balance, movement and stability. The findings will form the foundation for designing new protective flooring that looks and feels like a regular surface but can absorb the impact of a fall.

The team is currently seeking healthy adult volunteers of all ages, particularly those aged 65 and over, to participate in the trial.

Silas Purja, Postgraduate Researcher at the University of Surrey's School of Engineering and lead researcher in the trial, said:

"Every year in the UK, hundreds of thousands of older adults experience a fall – many of which lead to lengthy hospital stays and, tragically, some fatalities. Government figures show that unaddressed fall hazards in the home alone cost the NHS in England around £435 million annually, while fragility fractures – often caused by falls – cost the UK an estimated £4.4 billion each year, including £1.1 billion in social care. To help ease pressure on the health service and protect lives, we're investigating how different flooring types affect balance – with the goal of supporting the design of safer, smarter surfaces in various settings."

The current phase of the study involves testing different age groups on their ability to stand and walk on various floor conditions in a controlled indoor environment at the University. Researchers can then analyse how different levels of stiffness affect participants' natural balance.

The long-term vision is a flooring system that remains firm during normal use but softens when someone falls – reducing the risk of broken bones or head injuries. From the outside, it would resemble standard synthetic tiles or rubber flooring, but with smart materials and systems hidden beneath. As the technology matures, the flooring could eventually be rolled out in hospitals, care homes and private homes where older people are most at risk.

Dr Iman Mohagheghian, Associate Professor (Reader) in Mechanics of Materials at the University of Surrey and Principal Investigator on the project, said:

"Trials like this are crucial for determining age-related differences in balance and movement, and how those differences interact with the surfaces we walk on every day. Volunteers who take part will play an important role in helping us design safer, more supportive environments, and their contributions could ultimately help prevent life-altering injuries. If you would like to be part of our research, we'd love to hear from you."

The study is part of the wider Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)-funded project Multifunctional Flooring: Design for Independent Living, led by Dr Iman Mohagheghian. The project brings together an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including Dr Matthew Oldfield and Dr Radu Sporea from the University of Surrey, and Dr Amy Drahota from the University of Portsmouth.

The team is working closely with commercial partners and manufacturers of flooring for healthcare settings and advanced sensor and touch technologies. Together they aim to develop an integrated flooring solution that provides passive fall prevention, real-time fall detection and impact protection in one.

Participants will receive a £10 expenses payment for their time along with free parking at the University. To register your interest or find out more, contact Silas directly at s.purja@surrey.ac.uk.

Surrey University

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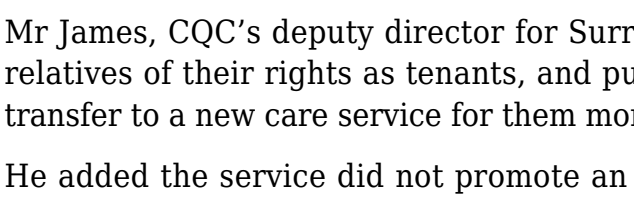
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Redhill care home put under special measures

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A supported living service in Redhill has been rated “inadequate” and put into special measures after inspectors said they uncovered six legal breaches.

The health watchdog slammed the service as putting “unnecessary stress” on people by only giving 28 days’ notice when required to move out.

Threeways Dom Care, on Brighton Road, which supports adults with learning disabilities, was inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in July 2025.

The watchdog found “serious leadership failings” which it said left people without dignity, independence or self care.

Roger James, CQC’s deputy director for Surrey, said: “Our inspection of Threeways Dom Care exposed serious leadership failings that were denying people dignity, respect, and independence in their care.”

Inspectors flagged problems across the board, including poor record-keeping, lack of staff training, and a failure to manage basic health needs like nutrition and epilepsy.

Some staff were found to be unkind, while others ignored health and safety basics. One care staff member was found wearing flip flops which could bring in dirt, and others were discovered to raise their voice at people or ask them to be quiet in what is meant to be their home.

The CQC report also criticised leaders for mishandling the closure of the home. Just one day after the inspection, residents and their families were told the service was shutting and given 28 days to move out.

Mr James, CQC’s deputy director for Surrey, added: “Threeways ignored people’s voices, failed to inform them or their relatives of their rights as tenants, and put an enormous amount of unnecessary stress on people as well as making the transfer to a new care service for them more difficult.”

He added the service did not promote an open or honest culture, with safeguarding concerns often missed or ignored, leaving people at risk of harm.

But Threeways management has hit back, accusing the regulator of ignoring their side of the story. A spokesperson for the service said: “Families have always been happy with the service and we’ve had positive feedback from professionals. The service will close once commissioners confirm a move date, and in the meantime, we’re doing our best to ensure a smooth transition.”

Despite those reassurances, the CQC has placed the service into special measures, meaning it will be closely monitored and expected to make urgent improvements if it wishes to continue operating.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Adult social care stock image. Credit Eduardo Barrios on Unsplash

Rehabilitation Hub in Leatherhead rehabilitated

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Epsom residents are set to benefit from a new integrated musculoskeletal (MSK) facility following a significant investment at Leatherhead Hospital.

The Leach Rehabilitation Hub has undergone a comprehensive transformation, creating a state-of-the-art facility that brings together MSK services into a single, purpose-built clinical space. The new hub features modern treatment areas, an open-plan rehabilitation gym, improved reception and waiting areas, refurbished clinical rooms, and enhanced facilities for both patients and staff.

The Hub will provide more joined-up, patient-centred care for residents across Surrey Downs. By co-locating multidisciplinary teams, the hub enables more efficient, seamless care, particularly for patients with complex needs, while increasing appointment capacity and reducing waiting times. The facility's community-based location ensures that patients can access high-quality rehabilitation closer to home, supporting faster recovery and greater independence.

The transformation of Hub has been made possible thanks to NHS Property Services and through the collaborative efforts of dedicated colleagues across SDHC and the wider NHS. The League of Friends of Leatherhead Hospital, a charity which has played a vital role in supporting the hospital's development over the years, funded the restoration of an important portrait of Mr Leach, whose gift of land made the hospital possible, which will be displayed within the new Hub.

This investment aligns with the NHS Long Term Plan's commitment to shifting care from acute hospitals into community settings, enhancing out-of-hospital care, and supporting people to recover and live independently. The Leach Rehabilitation Hub builds on SDHC's focus of delivering care at the right time, in the right place, and in partnership with the community, and deepens its commitment to neighbourhood working.

Binu Cherian, Chief Operating Officer for Surrey Downs Health & Care said:

"The opening of the Leach Rehabilitation Hub marks a significant step forward in our commitment to delivering outstanding, integrated care for our community. By bringing together teams in a modern, purpose-built environment, we are ensuring that patients across Surrey Downs have access to the highest quality rehabilitation services, closer to home. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of our partners, staff, and supporters, and we are proud to see this vision become a reality."

Emma Finegan, Estates Rationalisation Lead for NHS Property Services said*:*

"It's fantastic to see this facility officially opened, and to celebrate the collaborative working between partners involved in this development. We hope our NHS colleagues and their patients are pleased with the results and that the work carried out enables them to give and receive care in an improved, modernised setting that will serve the local neighbourhood for years to come."

Patients can continue to access initial support for their MSK concerns via their registered GP who can refer on to the relevant teams where necessary. Alternatively, Surrey Downs residents with muscle or joint problems can now self-refer via the GetUBetter app – a local support app helping individuals to self-manage their health concerns at home, work, and on the move. It can be accessed on a Smartphone or via the Web and is provided alongside a patient's NHS care. To find out more and to download the app, visit surreydownshealthandcare.nhs.uk/getubetter-app.

About Surrey Downs Health & Care Partnership

Surrey Downs Health & Care Partnership (SDHCP) is a body consisting of the NHS, local government, community health services, voluntary sector and other providers. Its ambition is to create a health and care system built around the people and communities of Dorking, **Epsom** and East Elmbridge and continues to evolve through system-wide collaboration and co-creation.

See Epsom and Ewell Times **rough guide** to the various health trusts and authorities for Epsom and Ewell and Surrey.

Epsom residents to get "care closer to home"?

13 November 2025

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Residents across East Surrey and Surrey Downs are set to benefit from more joined-up healthcare closer to home, as the area becomes one of the first in the country to roll out a new NHS neighbourhood health service.

The initiative forms part of the **National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme (NNHIP)** – a flagship element of the NHS Long Term Plan designed to move more care out of hospitals and into communities. Forty-three sites nationwide have been chosen to pioneer the programme, which brings together doctors, nurses, care staff, voluntary sector partners and community organisations into one coordinated neighbourhood team.

The idea is simple but ambitious: to make it easier for people to access help where they live, particularly those with multiple or complex needs, and to reduce pressure on hospitals by intervening earlier and more effectively in the community. Nationally, the NHS has argued that neighbourhood-based teams are key to tackling challenges such as an ageing population, rising demand for urgent care and workforce shortages, while also offering a more personalised, holistic service.

Local impact

Surrey East – covering Reigate, Oxted, Epsom, Dorking and Leatherhead – has already been recognised for its collaborative, place-based approach to health and care as part of the **Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System (ICS)**. By joining the national programme, local leaders believe they can accelerate that work.

Thirza Sawtell, Place Lead for Surrey East, said:
“Our work within Surrey East has long embraced a neighbourhood-based approach to health and care, and joining the NNHIP marks an exciting opportunity to build on that foundation. Being part of this national programme builds on our ambition to shift care out of hospitals and into the heart of our communities, tailoring care around the specific needs of our residents and putting them at the very heart of our decision making.

“We’re proud to be part of a movement that’s driving real change in how care is delivered locally, which ultimately will help improve health outcomes, reduce reliance on hospital services, and support our communities to live healthier, more independent lives right where they live.”

Alongside East Surrey, **Surrey West** – newly formed from the North West Surrey and Guildford & Waverley alliances – will take part in the **South East Neighbourhood Health Accelerator Programme**, which focuses on strengthening team working, responding to local health priorities and testing practical projects to improve access to services.

National background

The NHS has been gradually building neighbourhood-level models of care since the publication of the Long Term Plan in 2019. The goal is for Integrated Care Systems across England to establish around 1,000 such neighbourhoods, typically serving populations of 30,000–50,000 people. Each will be supported by multidisciplinary teams – from GPs and district nurses to physiotherapists, mental health workers and social care staff – working together to prevent ill-health and provide continuity of care.

Early pilot schemes in other parts of the country have reported benefits such as fewer hospital admissions for frail patients, faster access to community mental health support, and more proactive management of long-term conditions like diabetes and COPD. The rollout in Surrey East means local residents are among the first to see these principles put into practice.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Idealised neighbour hood health centre

Laser gift to Epsom Hospital shines light on the hand of Jimmy Hendry

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The arrival of a major piece of medical equipment always lifts spirits among hospital staff—but the recent installation of a £40,000 laser at Epsom General Orthopaedics held particular poignancy, bringing back memories of a much-loved colleague.

Jimmy Hendry, who died earlier this year aged 73 after a short battle with lung cancer, was a fixture at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals. A devoted soccer fan, grandfather, and generous supporter of charitable causes, he was also a regular donor and strong supporter of the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund (EMEF), the local charity that funded the laser.

Since its founding in June 1979, EMEF has raised well over £5 million to procure medical equipment that would otherwise not be provided by the NHS for Epsom General Hospital. Among its many purchases are a CT scanner, a vascular scanner, liver diagnosis equipment, and devices that help treat broken wrists without recourse to surgery.

At the heart of EMEF is Bess Harding, the Fund Coordinator, who holds an MBE. She works closely with volunteers, trustees, NHS staff and the wider community to identify equipment needs, raise funds, and oversee distribution.

“We know Jimmy is still sorely missed,” says Bess Harding. “He worked at both Epsom and St. Helier Hospitals and was known too for cleverly ‘inventing’ medical equipment: such as the Hendry Hand which played an important role in wrist fractures.”

Jimmy delighted in sport—he donned boots and shirts for Chelsea in 1980, Charlton in 1990, later turning out for Sutton FC. He also served as a physiotherapist for local teams. Bess adds: “His popularity was clear when well over 200 people attended the funeral.”

Jimmy lived locally and leaves five children and three grandchildren. The Nuvolas laser now in place is invaluable for ENT procedures, allowing surgeons to treat delicate areas with accuracy. Thanks to his generosity and EMEF’s dedication, that legacy will continue to light the way.

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