



## Epsom MP sponsors special youth art in Parliament

13 February 2026



Surrey young people using NHS mental health services have taken their artwork to the heart of government, with an exhibition at the House of Commons offering MPs an insight into their experiences and the support they received.

The exhibition, taking place from 10-15 February, showcases work created by young people supported by the STARS and New Leaf services, part of Mindworks Surrey. STARS supports young people affected by sexual abuse and assault, while New Leaf supports those who are in care, leaving care, adopted or under special guardianship orders.

Young people are sharing their artwork with MPs to showcase how creativity supports young people's mental health and to highlight the positive impact of the services.

The pieces explore identity, hope, growth and recovery, capturing what can be difficult to articulate in words and offering an honest reflection of young peoples' lived experiences of mental health support.

One young person whose artwork is being exhibited said: "STARS has changed my life, I can be me now. I was shocked when I heard my art would be at the House of Commons, I am really proud that people like my picture and what I created."

Rebecca Robertson, Specialist Mental Health and Art Therapist said: "The young people we support have expressed their thoughts and feelings around their life experiences using art materials.

"Art making can provide an important alternative to more traditional verbal therapies and can be a vital part of helping young people to engage in support, particularly when working with trauma."

The House of Commons event was sponsored by **Helen Maguire, MP for Epsom and Ewell**, who attended the exhibition last summer and supported bringing the art to Parliament.

Helen said: "I'm delighted to see this exhibition come alive. It demonstrates the powerful work that New Leaf and STARS do and the importance of young people getting the right care and support for their mental health."

Emina Atic-Lee, Service Manager for STARS and New Leaf services, said: "We are incredibly proud to see the voices of the young people we support take to the stage at the House of Commons. Each piece offers an honest and powerful window into how young people use creativity to make sense of their experiences, express emotions that are hard to put into words, and recognise their own strength.

"To showcase this work in such a nationally significant setting is a truly special moment for them and for everyone involved in the services."

Press release from Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

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## Epsom therapist seeks to lift our moods in gloomy weather

13 February 2026



It feels like Epsom has hardly seen the sun lately, making winter feel longer and delaying the arrival of spring. This kind of dullness is often described as "typical British weather", but at the time of writing some parts of the UK have seen rain



fall every single day of the year so far.

When daylight is limited and the rain never seems to stop, it is entirely normal to feel low, tired, or less motivated than usual. The good news is that there are some simple, evidence-based steps that can help support your mood, even when the weather is working against you.

Here, Mark from Mind & Meaning Therapy shares three proven mental health tips to help give your mood a boost.

## A small social check-in each day

We are social creatures, and even small social connections can improve our mood. These do not need to be big events or require a lot of energy. Simple ways to stay socially connected include sending a text to a friend, scheduling a short phone call, or asking someone to meet for a drink.

These small check-ins can significantly increase feelings of connection. Research shows that regular positive social interactions are linked to better mood, greater life satisfaction, and lower levels of stress.

## Get outside and get some natural light

Even on grey days, daylight is far stronger than indoor lighting. Try to dodge the showers and get outside for 10-20 minutes once a day. A walk to the shops or a quick loop around the park is enough to help.

Natural light helps regulate the body clock, which in turn supports both mood and sleep. Studies have found that people who spend more time in daylight during the winter months are less likely to report depressive symptoms than those who remain indoors with low light exposure.

## Do one thing to improve your sleep

Sleep and mood are closely linked, and improving sleep can make a noticeable difference to how you feel emotionally. Simple, proven steps include going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day, reducing smartphone use before bedtime (for example by leaving your phone in another room), keeping the bedroom cool while ensuring a warm bed, avoiding caffeine late in the afternoon, and leaving an hour or two between your last alcoholic drink and bedtime.

Better sleep helps the brain regulate emotions and reduces stress, making it easier to cope with everyday ups and downs.

## What to do if low mood is persistent

If your mental health feels poor over a longer period, or if everyday life feels unusually overwhelming, speaking to a mental health professional can help. Support can make a real difference.

You can contact Mark at Mind & Meaning Therapy in Epsom to explore what may be behind how you are feeling and to find support that suits you.

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### Mind & Meaning - Therapy in Epsom & Online

[mindandmeaning.co.uk](http://mindandmeaning.co.uk)

Email: [hello@mindandmeaning.co.uk](mailto:hello@mindandmeaning.co.uk)



Sponsored article.



Images: Pink umbrella in the rain, Erik Witsoe and The sun is shining through the clouds in the sky, Alireza Banijani  
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## Epsom and Ewell's MP champion's Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on "Time to Talk Day"

13 February 2026



On the edge of Epsom lies Horton Cemetery — quiet, overgrown and easy to miss. More than 9,000 people are buried there. Most never had headstones. Many never had visitors. Almost all were patients of the former Epsom Cluster of psychiatric hospitals, men and women whose final resting place reflects how society once viewed mental illness: something to be hidden, managed and ultimately forgotten.

In 2026, on Time to Talk Day, [5th February] Horton Cemetery forces us to ask an uncomfortable question: how far have we really come?

Horton Cemetery was created to serve what was once the largest cluster of psychiatric hospitals in Europe. At its height, the Epsom hospitals housed thousands of people with severe mental illness, learning disabilities and complex needs. Those who died without family or money were buried together anonymously. This was not ancient history. Horton Hospital closed in 1997. Some of those buried there lived into the late twentieth century — into the era many of us think of as modern and progressive.

Sites like Horton Cemetery challenge us to ask not just whether we are talking more openly about mental health, but whether we have truly confronted the stigma that shaped places like this, and whether we are prepared to protect the dignity of those still buried there.

Today, the cemetery has been sold to a private owner, with hopes of future development. Like many historic pauper burial sites nationwide, it sits under pressure from land values and planning decisions. I have urged the government not to grant exhumation licences at Horton Cemetery and to properly safeguard similar sites as places of remembrance, not obstacles to development. These are not empty plots. They are graves. How we treat them matters, because how we remember the dead reflects how we value the living.



Friends of Horton Cemetery, families, and Professor Alana Harris of King's College London have worked tirelessly through initiatives such as the Lost Souls Project, which seeks to recover the names and stories of those buried anonymously in former asylum cemeteries. Their work is a quiet act of justice — restoring identity where the system erased it, and dignity where stigma once prevailed.

But local efforts can only go so far. That is why there are growing calls for a national memorial to those who lived and died in Britain's historic mental health institutions. Such a memorial would not rewrite history, but it would acknowledge it, signifying that now is the time to talk.

Time to Talk Day is often framed around everyday conversations — a coffee and a chat, a poster on a train reminding us to check in on loved ones. These things matter. They help chip away at silence and shame. Horton Cemetery asks us to go further.

Epsom tells the story of how this country has treated mental illness. It was once the centre of a system built on isolation and control. Today, it hosts the headquarters of the Samaritans — an organisation rooted in compassion and listening. That journey should give us hope. But it also gives Epsom, and Horton, a responsibility. If we are serious about confronting mental health stigma, this is one of the places where that conversation must begin.

Because today, people with severe mental illness still face some of the deepest inequalities in our society. Recent data paints a stark picture: those facing the longest waits for mental health care are now waiting nearly two years — an average of 658 days — more than twice as long as people waiting for elective physical health treatment. The consequences are devastating. Adults living with severe mental illness, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, have a life expectancy 15 to 20 years lower than the general population.

These are not abstract statistics. They reflect lives cut short, needs unmet, and a system that still too often talks about people with severe mental illness rather than listening to them.

The Government now has the opportunity — and the responsibility — to show that mental health reform means more than warm words. Safeguarding sites like Horton and recognising the historic mistreatment of people with mental illness would be a powerful signal that dignity is not conditional and remembrance matters. I look forward to discussions with ministers about how we protect Horton Cemetery and similar sites across the country — not as relics of an uncomfortable past, but as places of reflection and learning.

Time to Talk Day should not only ask whether we are speaking openly. It should ask who we are hearing, whose voices are still missing, and whether, finally, we are willing to restore dignity to those whose voices were never heard.

Horton Cemetery is a quiet reminder that stigma thrives in silence. In 2026, are we ready to listen to what it is telling us?

Helen Maguire MP



For further information about the work of the charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery visit their website [HERE](#)

Image: Horton Cemetery with former patients photos

Related reports:

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Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

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## When is attempted suicide anti-social? A Surrey police dilemma

13 February 2026



A woman has criticised Surrey Police for giving her an anti-social behaviour warning after officers intervened while she considered taking her own life. She has claimed the move left her feeling "ashamed" and too scared to call for help if she experiences the same struggles again.

The 40-year-old, who asked to remain anonymous, said she was issued with a Community Protection Warning (CPW) in October 2025 after officers intervened when she was at risk of suicide in Guildford town centre late at night. The supermarket worker said she later received a second warning in December, despite claiming she had not breached the first.

CPWs are normally used to tackle anti-social behaviour that harms or causes disturbance to the community. This could include harassment, vandalism or persistent nuisance. However, the Guildford resident said these anti-social behaviour powers are being wrongly used against vulnerable people rather than preventing crime.

A Surrey Police spokesperson said the warnings are to set "behavioural boundaries" and are "not about criminalising behaviour". The Force uses a national framework 'Right Care, Right Person' to ensure health-related incidents are handled by specialists (NHS, social care) rather than the police.

The woman said the notice, which warns of potential consequences such as arrest or £100 fines if the behaviour continues, has had a chilling effect on her and has left her "too ashamed" to tell her close friends and family what happened. "It's made me less safe," she said. "If anyone had concerns about me they couldn't call the emergency services because if I survived [there would be] consequences. And that puts my friends and me in a horrible position."

The Guildford resident explained she did everything to avoid disrupting the public and was not being attention-seeking, as she fears some people may label her. "They are completely mis-using something designed to protect communities from things like youths carrying knives," she said. "We are giving them money and power to tackle anti-social behaviour and that is not what they are doing."

The woman described how officers initially spoke calmly with her, telling her she was not in any trouble and persuaded her to come to safety. However, she said the atmosphere "completely changed" as soon as she was safe. "When I say that I try to get help and say there isn't any, the [police] sort of imply that I'm not trying hard enough." The woman said she feels "failed" by mental health services and wants the police to recognise the pressure on this sector.

The 40-year-old said she was sent the first warning to her home address and the second warning was given in her workplace, in front of colleagues, which she said was humiliating. Although she made a complaint to Surrey Police, the woman said she was told no action would be taken. A police spokesperson has said they cannot comment on individual cases when a complaint is subject to review and an ongoing investigation.

The woman raised concerns about something called SIM (serenity integrated mentoring): a controversial model that once linked police with mental health services. In some areas around 2022, this was used against those who frequently sought emergency services help in a crisis. But Surrey Police said it is committed to delivering 'Right Care, Right Person' in making sure health-related incidents are dealt by specialists.

A Surrey Police spokesman said: "An initiative is underway in Surrey, based on similar models elsewhere in the UK, which is aimed at supporting the policing response to individuals who frequently present to police with suicidal behaviour which could put them at risk of danger. The response focuses on the core policing duties outlined under Right Care, Right Person to set boundaries and provide a consistent response from front line officers.

"The project involves working with partner agencies, such as health and social care colleagues, to signpost risk and vulnerability to the most suitable agency. Where necessary police interventions, such as community protection warnings, will be considered as part of the approach to reduce disproportionate demand and set behavioural boundaries. These would not be issued without the support of the relevant partner agencies.

"Setting these behavioural boundaries is not about criminalising suicidal behaviour - they are put in place to ensure that these individuals are accessing the right service to provide them with the support they need."

Anyone can contact Samaritans FREE any time from any phone on 116 123, even a mobile without credit. This number won't show up on your phone bill. Or you can [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

Whatever you are going through, you don't have to face it alone. Call Samaritans for free on 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) for more information.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Image - purely an illustration and not real.



## Green escape to wellness for Surrey's anxious

13 February 2026



A new photography exhibition by Active Prospects is shining a light on the power of nature, creativity, and personalised wellbeing support.

The stunning images on display were all taken by people who have taken part in the charity's Green Escape wellness recovery programme, funded through the Mental Health Investment Fund (jointly funded by Surrey County Council and Surrey Heartlands ICB).

Over the past year, small groups of two or three people have enjoyed 8-10 nature trips to beautiful parts of Surrey, including places that are sometimes difficult to reach by public transport, such as RHS Wisley. Each trip gave participants the chance to explore new places, take photographs and build confidence at their own pace. Their work has now been brought together in a unique photo book and this special exhibition.

For many, these trips were life-changing. One participant had not left their home for 10 years. With gentle encouragement, practical support and small achievable steps, they were able to join the group, enjoy the outdoors and reach a personal goal they once thought impossible. Families are involved too, and wellbeing coaches from Active Prospects support each person throughout their journey. It's a true team effort.

At the end of the wellness recovery programme, each participant leaves with a personalised action plan. By removing barriers, such as fear of using public transport or trying new activities, people gain the confidence to become more independent. Some have even taken their new skills into work or volunteering. One participant discovered a passion for paddleboarding and is now a qualified instructor.

Research shows that around half of autistic adults experience anxiety disorders. Every part of Active Prospects' wellbeing coaching is designed to ease anxiety, build confidence and open up new opportunities for neurodivergent people over 18. Participants often tell the team they felt "invisible" before joining. Peer connection is central to the programme, and activities focus on what makes people smile, whether that's creative writing, photography or paddleboarding. One member's love of table tennis inspired Table Tennis Thursdays, which is now a much-loved weekly meet-up.

The programme is person-centred, with coaching tailored to each individual. Thanks to Mental Health Investment Fund support of £299,270 over 2 years, as well as the programme, Active Prospects also developed Emojo, a digital wellbeing app that helps people track how they're feeling across eight areas of wellbeing such as 'Environment'. Users can set goals, get ideas for new challenges, and create a monthly mood calendar that helps them notice progress and patterns over time.

The photography exhibition celebrates everything the programme stands for, confidence, creativity, connection, and the joy of discovering something new.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Public Health said: "The exhibition has showcased wonderful moments captured in nature, and it was inspiring to hear the stories behind each photograph. It's clear to see the positive impact of the support provided by Active Prospects—helping people improve their mental health, build confidence, and enhance their overall wellbeing."

Dr Charlotte Canniff, Joint Chief Medical Officer for NHS Surrey Heartlands, said: "This exhibition shows the real difference personalised wellbeing coaching can make. We're proud that, through the Mental Health Investment Fund, Active Prospects has been able to create Inclusive Wellbeing Coaches to support adults with multiple challenges to grow in confidence and quality of life."

Maria Mills CEO Active Prospects said: "Connecting to nature and the outdoors offers a real boost to wellbeing. Already participants have shared a documented 25% improvement in their wellbeing presentation, showing how investment in inclusive community support pays back public funding in multiples, but most importantly enables people to thrive."

Leanne – Programme participant: "I wasn't going out, was overwhelmed and my senses were overloaded. Since being part of the programme, I'm able to get out and about and I'm seeing things differently."

Kieran – Programme participant and a member of the Active Prospects Wellbeing Team: "Being outside (in nature) after years in hospital gives you a feeling of freedom and space."

Mental Health Investment Fund

The Mental Health Investment Fund (MHIF) is a Surrey wide, all age, resource to enable the delivery of the outcomes in Priority Two of the Health and Well-Being Strategy. This priority area is focused on prevention, removing barriers, and supporting people to become proactive in improving their emotional health and wellbeing.



Established in 2022, the MHIF is a joint fund with Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board (ICB) and is part of the county's No One left Behind agenda. The additional investment in mental health provision was ring fenced within the 22/23 Council Tax with an additional contribution from Surrey Heartlands.

Surrey County Council



Photo: Lucy a participant

## Surrey tops Man v FAT contest

13 February 2026



Guildford's MAN v FAT Football Club has been crowned Community Club of the Year 2025 at the nationwide MAN v FAT Football Awards, recognising its outstanding contribution to improving men's health and wellbeing.

In Surrey, the MAN v FAT weight loss programme is commissioned by Surrey County Council through the free healthy lifestyle service One You Surrey. The FA-accredited scheme, which also runs in Woking, combines football with structured weight-loss support and is aimed at overweight and obese men with a BMI of 27.5 or above, helping participants lose weight, gain confidence and build friendships.

At each session, players weigh in before taking part in a 30-minute six-a-side football match. Teams receive extra goal bonuses based on their combined weight loss. A team's match scores and weekly weight-loss totals then contribute to its standing in the club's league table.

Mark Smithies from the Guildford club said joining had been transformative for him: he has lost weight, improved his fitness and made lasting friendships. He added that the positive, supportive environment has boosted his confidence and mindset, describing the club as "more than just football... a proper community".

### H5 How the programme supports players

Alongside weekly football sessions, MAN v FAT players receive additional support off the pitch, including healthy meal ideas, general fitness tips and access to a bespoke mental health platform through partners JAAQ.

Across the UK, MAN v FAT players have collectively lost more than 800,000 pounds in weight.

### H5 Success in Guildford and Woking

The Guildford club meets on Friday evenings at Kings College - Community Sports Hub on Southway and currently has 68 members regularly achieving their weight-loss goals. Over the past twelve months, players at the club have shed more than 34 stone of excess weight, with progress continuing week on week.

The Woking club meets on Monday evenings at the Woking Sportsbox and has supported 40 players to lose a combined 365kg during 2025.

### H5 Find out more



Funded places are available for Surrey residents at the Guildford and Woking clubs through Surrey County Council and One You Surrey.

To register, visit [manvfat.com/football](http://manvfat.com/football) and search for Guildford or Woking to apply and begin your journey to a healthier 2026.

Surrey County Council



## Epsom Hospital faces flu challenge

13 February 2026



Hospitals serving Epsom and Ewell are facing one of their toughest starts to a year in recent memory, with dozens of beds taken up by flu patients and others closed because of infection control, as winter illnesses surge across the country.

As of Sunday, 45 beds across St George's, Epsom and St Helier hospitals were occupied by patients with influenza, according to the St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group. At the same time, further beds have had to be taken out of use due to flu and norovirus outbreaks, reducing the system's overall capacity just as demand is rising.

The combination of cold weather, widespread winter viruses and a growing number of patients needing specialist treatment has created what NHS leaders locally describe as a "bleak" start to the new year.

Elaine Clancy, Group Chief Nurse for St George's, Epsom and St Helier, said hospitals across the group were seeing "some very sick patients" as winter illnesses and low temperatures take their toll. "Don't make the mistake of thinking flu is just a bad cold," she said. "These figures show the infection can make people seriously ill, and I'd urge people to take steps to ensure they and their loved ones don't suffer."

### A national problem, not just local

The pressure on Epsom and St Helier reflects a wider national trend. NHS England has warned that socialising over Christmas and New Year is likely to have fuelled a rebound in flu, Covid-19 and other winter viruses, with senior figures cautioning that the worst of the season is "far from over".

Across England, hospitals are again reporting high numbers of admissions for respiratory illness, alongside continued demand from people with complex medical needs who are more vulnerable in cold weather. The knock-on effect is felt most sharply in accident and emergency departments, where delays grow when wards are full and patients cannot be moved on.

Public health experts have long warned that flu remains a serious illness, particularly for older people, pregnant women and those with underlying conditions. In bad seasons, it contributes to thousands of excess deaths nationally, even though it is often dismissed as minor.

Norovirus, meanwhile, spreads rapidly in hospitals and care settings, forcing wards or bays to close for deep cleaning, further reducing available beds at precisely the moment they are most needed.

### What people can do

Local NHS leaders are urging residents to take simple but effective steps to reduce the spread of infection and help protect the health service. These include getting vaccinated against flu if eligible, washing hands regularly, staying at home if unwell, and avoiding contact with vulnerable people when displaying symptoms. Keeping homes warm - ideally at 18°C or above in key rooms - and wrapping up when going outdoors also helps reduce the risk of illness.



People are also being asked to use health services appropriately, so that emergency departments remain available for those in urgent need. NHS 111, which is available online and by phone 24 hours a day, can direct people to the right service, while community pharmacists can advise on many minor illnesses and treatments.

Residents are encouraged to check on neighbours, friends and family who may be vulnerable, to make sure they have food, medication and adequate heating during the cold snap.

With flu and winter viruses still circulating widely, health leaders say the coming weeks will be critical — both for hospitals trying to manage demand, and for communities doing their part to keep themselves and others safe.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related report:

[Epsom Hospital braces for flu spike](#)

## Do you have the bottle for these cold nights?

13 February 2026



With the UK in the midst of a bitter cold snap, many of us are reaching for hot water bottles to help keep warm during the day and through the night.

While hot water bottles are an effective and affordable way to keep warm, in 2024 nearly 1,000 people were admitted to burn units in England and Wales following hot water bottle accidents.

Here, the team at Health and Safety training experts High Speed Training share some practical advice on how to use hot water bottles safely.

Dr Richard Anderson, Head of Learning and Development at High Speed Training, said: "Hot water bottles are a fantastic way to beat the chill, and with energy costs remaining a concern, they are more popular than ever. However, like any household item that uses high heat, they aren't without risk."

### Check the age

It is recommended that hot water bottles are replaced every two years. The rubber used in their construction can deteriorate over time, making bottles more likely to split or leak.

You can check when a hot water bottle was made by looking for a flower-shaped symbol, known as a 'daisy wheel', embossed onto the neck or body of the bottle. The number in the centre shows the year of manufacture, while the twelve surrounding segments represent the months of the year. The number of segments with dots indicates the month the bottle was made.

For example, if the symbol has 25 in the middle and dots in the first six segments, the bottle was manufactured in June 2025. If a segment contains more than one dot, the number of dots in the final filled segment shows which week of the month the bottle was produced.

### How to fill and use your hot water bottle safely

Dr Anderson added: "Before filling a hot water bottle, always check it for visible damage or signs of wear and tear. Avoid filling the bottle with boiling water, as this can weaken the internal seams. Allow the water to cool slightly before filling.

"It's also advisable to only fill the bottle to around two-thirds full. Expel any remaining air before tightening the stopper securely."

He also advised always using a cover on a hot water bottle to reduce the risk of contact burns, and never sitting or lying on one, as this increases the likelihood of the bottle failing. "When not in use, empty the bottle completely and store it with the stopper removed in a cool, dry place, such as a cupboard."



Copy provided by High Speed Training

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## Warm places to go to in Epsom and Ewell

13 February 2026



### Christ Church Ewell

**Address:** Cheam Road, Ewell, KT17 1AD

**Opening Times:** Wednesday from 10am to 1pm

**Services offered:** Hot drinks; meals; social activities

**Accessibility:** Ramps available for disabled access and disabled toilet

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### Epsom Methodist Church

**Address:** Ashley Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5AQ

**Opening Hours:** Wednesday from 10am to 6pm

**Services offered:** Hot drinks; meals; craft activities and social activities;

**Accessibility:** Fully accessible

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### King's Church, Epsom

**Address:** Off Gibraltar Crescent, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 9BU

**Opening Hours:** Friday from 6pm to 8pm

**Services Offered:** Hot drinks; Meals; Craft activities; Social activities;

**Accessibility:** Fully accessible.

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### Love Me Love My Mind

**Address:** St Barnabas Church, Temple Road, Epsom, KT19 8HA

**Opening Times:** Monday from 1pm to 7pm

**Services Offered:** Meals; Hot drinks; Craft activities; Physical activities; Social activities; Meals.

**Accessibility:** Wheelchair accessible; Disabled Toilet

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### St Mary the Virgin, Ewell

**Address:** Ewell Village Hall, London Road, Ewell, KT17 2AY

**Opening Times:** Thursday from 12pm to 2pm

**Services Offered:** Hot drinks; Meals; Social activities; Food bank/ Food Club / Community Fridge.

**Accessibility:** Accessible toilet available.



## Epsom Library

**Address:** 6 Epsom Square, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8AG

**Opening Times:**

- Monday: 9.30am to 5.30pm
- Tuesday : 9.30am to 7pm
- Wednesday: 9.30am to 5.30pm
- Thursday: 9.30am to 7pm
- Friday: 9.30am to 5.30pm
- Saturday: 9.30am to 5pm
- Sunday: Closed

**Services Offered:** Warm space, hot and cold drinks, events and activities.

**Accessibility:** Full information can be found on the Epsom Library Webpage

## Ewell Court Library

**Address:** Ewell Court Community Library, Ewell Court House, Lakehurst Road, Ewell, Surrey KT19 0EB

**Opening Times:**

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 10am to 5pm
- Wednesday: 10am to 5pm
- Thursday: Closed
- Friday: 10am to 5pm
- Saturday: 10am to 4pm
- Sunday: Closed

**Services Offered:** Warm space, hot and cold drinks, events and activities.

**Accessibility:** Full information can be found on the Ewell Court Community Library Webpage

## Ewell Library

**Address:** Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1UF

**Opening Times:** Tuesday to Saturday from 9:30am to 5pm

**Services Offered:** Warm space, hot and cold drinks via a voucher scheme with the onsite cafe, events and activities.

**Accessibility:** Full information can be found on the Ewell Library Webpage

## Stoneleigh Library

**Address:** 1 Stoneleigh Broadway, Stoneleigh, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 2JA

**Opening Times:**

- Monday: 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm
- Tuesday: 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 10am to 1pm
- Friday: 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm



- Saturday: 10am to 4pm;
- Sunday: Closed

**Services Offered:** Warm space, hot and cold drinks, events and activities.

**Accessibility:** Full information can be found on the Stoneleigh Library Webpage

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## Tattenhams Library

**Address:** Tattenhams Community Library, Tattenham Crescent, Epsom Downs, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5NU

**Opening Times:**

- Monday: 10am to 1pm
- Tuesday: 10am to 1pm
- Wednesday: 10am to 1pm
- Thursday: 10am to 4pm
- Friday: 10am to 5pm
- Saturday: 10am to 4pm
- Sunday: Closed

**Services Offered:** Warm space, hot and cold drinks, events and activities.

**Accessibility:** Full information can be found on the Tattenhams Library Webpage

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## Epsom Vineyard Church (Community Venue)

**Address:** 23 Lansdowne Road, West Ewell, Surrey, KT19 9QJ

**Opening Times:** Wednesday: 2pm to 5pm and Friday 10am to 12pm

**Services Offered:** Hot drinks ;Social activities; Light Meals;

**Accessibility:** Disabled access; accessible toilets; parking for 5 cars, plus on street parking.

Image: Epsom Methodist Church

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## Epsom snooker star on cue to help patients

13 February 2026



Epsom General Hospital is grateful for the laser-like focus of snooker legend Jimmy White. The 63-year-old star of the green baize took time out from his busy schedule recently to present a £62,000 camera to consultant ophthalmologist Akanksha Bagch at the Eye Unit, on behalf of Epsom Medical Equipment Fund (EMEF).

The Zeiss Clarus 50 is a valuable asset in diagnosis. "It's a high-resolution, ultra-widefield fundus camera offering true colour images of the retina and optic discs among other excellent features," says Mr Bagch, "giving a detailed view from the macula to the periphery of the retina allowing clinicians to diagnose and manage multiple eye diseases including glaucoma and retina conditions such as diabetic retinopathy."

"With the increasing prevalence of glaucoma, this camera will play an integral role in running a diagnostic hub allowing a greater throughput of patients per clinic and reducing the already prolonged waiting times in the NHS, thus allowing for safer delivery of eye services."

EMEF founder and organiser Bess Harding says: "I am so grateful to Jimmy — who lives locally — for coming to make the



presentation. We were delighted to be able to purchase the camera which will play an important role in preventing blindness. This would not have been possible without the support of the community for our fund-raising."

Forty-six years on from its formation and with more than £4 million already handed over, the fund's work carries on. Other equipment is always required. If you would like to help, donations can be made to EMEF at 32 Tealing Drive, Ewell, Surrey, KT19 0JS or to NatWest Account No. 66236924 Sort Code 60-08-01.

Andrew Wills

## Epsom mural project to celebrate neurodiversity

13 February 2026



A major new public art project celebrating neurodiversity is planned for Epsom, led by local autistic artist **Marcele Silvina Rodrigues White**, following support from the rail operator and council to create a large mural close to Epsom railway station.

The mural, expected to be painted in late spring or early summer next year, aims to raise awareness of neurodiversity while celebrating inclusive artistic expression. It will involve artists who are autistic, neurodivergent, and disabled, with the project designed to give visibility to artists who often face barriers within the mainstream art world.

Marcele, who has lived in Epsom for the past seven years, said the project is both personal and community-focused. After moving from London, she describes settling in Epsom as "coming home", drawn by its green spaces, calm rhythm of life and supportive community. It was in Epsom, five years ago, that she began painting and started the artistic journey that has since taken her work across the UK and internationally.

An autistic artist and curator, Marcele has exhibited widely, including in London, Greece, New York and Rome. In 2024 her work was shown internationally, including at an exhibition organised by DaisY at The Lightbox in Woking and later at the Dantabus Art Gallery in Rome. She subsequently exhibited at Art Expo in New York and was invited to present her work in France at a special event organised by Fondazione Effeto Arte.

Alongside her own practice, Marcele has focused on creating platforms for other artists. In March 2025 she launched *Evoking Connections*, her own exhibition and arts initiative, at Horton in Epsom. The event brought together autistic, neurodivergent and disabled artists with the aim of raising awareness of neurodiversity and celebrating difference through creativity. Further editions followed at venues including Art & Grind in Guildford and Caballo Lounge in Epsom, with participating artists including those with multiple sclerosis, wheelchair users, autistic artists and neurotypical contributors.

More recently, Marcele was selected as one of the curators for the DaisY-Chain network, which supports artists in the spectrum and artists with different kinds of disabilities. She also shares her artwork and advocacy through her Instagram page, *thoughts\_art\_poem*.

The planned Epsom mural will reflect these values, with design approval forming part of the next stage of the project. The rail operator has expressed enthusiasm for the proposal and may also provide financial support, subject to confirmation. Images from Marcele's previous work will be used to accompany coverage of the project, and a group photograph of Marcele with participating artists will form part of the public launch.

Marcele said she hopes the mural will not only brighten a prominent public space, but also help challenge perceptions around disability and neurodiversity. "I understand the transformative power that art can have in our lives," she said. "I want others to experience that same sense of expression, connection and empowerment."

Further details about the mural design and painting dates are expected to be confirmed in the coming months.

Sam Jones - Reporter





## Nirvana comes to Epsom care home

13 February 2026



Sponsored article: **Linden House Care Home in Epsom** is proud to announce a new era under its new owners, Nirvana Care Group. Established in the 1980s, the home has long served the local community, and the new leadership has already made significant investments to further elevate care standards across Surrey.

Phase 1 of a resident-led refurbishment is now complete, shaped by meaningful input from those who live at the home. Linden House has also invested in modern technologies and strengthened service partnerships to enhance safety, comfort, and wellbeing.

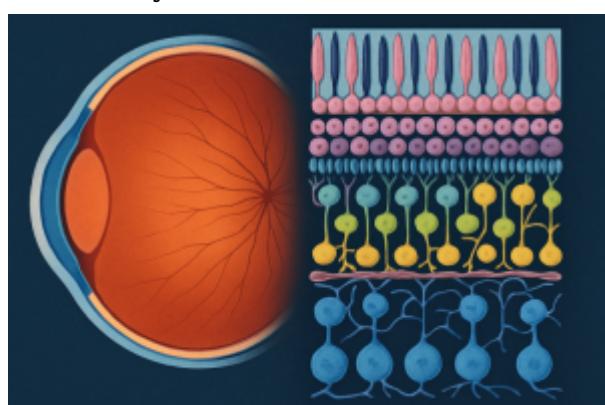
The transition has been warmly received by staff, with six former team members returning to support the refreshed vision. The home is also delighted to welcome back former manager Reshma Topsy, reflecting Linden House's strong sense of community and continuity. With a dedicated multicultural team and an in-house chef, residents enjoy personalised menus tailored to cultural and faith requirements, along with fully customised activity programmes.

Following the renewed leadership, upgraded facilities, and a focus on truly personalised care a small number of vacancies remain for families seeking warm, modern, and compassionate care.

For enquiries or to arrange a visit, contact Reshma on **01372 721 447**

## Surrey Uni study may show way to reverse vision loss

13 February 2026



New computer modelling could help scientists better understand how the retina regenerates, opening the door to new treatments for vision loss, according to a study from the University of Surrey.

The first-of-its-kind model is capable of detailing how the retina - the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye - can build its complex structure from just one type of stem cell, deepening our understanding of how sight develops and how its development could inform studies of injury or disease.

Using advanced agent-based modelling, the research team have simulated key stages of retinogenesis - the process by which identical progenitor cells diversify into the six types of neurons that make up the retina.

The model shows how simple genetic rules and subtle randomness work together to form the retina's precise layered architecture, a structure essential for how we see.

The paper was presented at IWWBIO 2025 and published in Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS).

Cayla Harris, lead researcher from the University of Surrey's Nature Inspired Computing and Engineering Group, said:

*"The beauty of biology is that complex structures can emerge from simple rules. Our simulations show how genetically identical cells can, through intrinsic bias and chance, self-organise into the retina's highly ordered layers - a pattern that underpins how we see the world."*

Using the BioDynaMo software platform, the team modelled virtual "cells" that grow, divide and make fate decisions based on internal gene-regulation logic, mimicking biological behaviour. They tested different network designs for how genes might interact when cells decide what kind of neuron to become.



Two particular designs - called the Reentry and Multidirectional models - reproduced real biological data most accurately, suggesting that retinal cells may make their fate decisions through overlapping and flexible genetic pathways, rather than a fixed sequence.

This approach could help researchers better understand not only healthy eye development but also what happens in retinal diseases and in regenerative research exploring how stem cells might rebuild tissue.

Dr Roman Bauer, senior author on the study from the University of Surrey, added:

*"Computational modelling gives us a powerful way to explore biological processes we can't easily observe in real time. By simulating every cell's decision and interaction, we can test hypotheses about how tissues like the retina form - and how to restore them when damaged."*

This research is supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

Cayla Harris added:

*"We think that our research is a step forward in linking genetics, computation and developmental biology to understand one of the body's most complex neural structures."*

Surrey University



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## Sixty years of tea, chat and companionship in Epsom

13 February 2026



A charity supporting lonely and isolated older residents in Epsom and Ewell is marking its 60th anniversary.

Re-engage volunteers run monthly free tea parties for people aged 75 and over, alongside a call-befriending service for those who live alone.

### **"Almost part of my family"**

Lesley Renwick, who has led the local group since 2005, said they had supported "hundreds of lonely older people who often don't see or speak to anyone for long periods". She added: "Our group is very friendly and they've almost become part of my family. It's lovely seeing the older people enjoy themselves, simply having a chat and a cup of tea."

Re-engage began in London in 1965 when a young lawyer, Trevor Lyttleton, and friends set out to support isolated older people. Epsom and Ewell was one of the earliest groups to follow. Today the charity has thousands of volunteers running hundreds of tea parties, activity groups and call-befriending sessions for around 6,500 older people nationwide.

### **'It was worth the wait'**

Phyllis, 91, has been attending the local tea parties since 2011. "I love them," she said. "The volunteers make you so welcome. We all get to know each other and have a good old chat. I like the companionship. It's nice to have someone to talk to. I had to wait two years to get into the group because it was so popular but it was well worth the wait."

Pat, 86, whose husband died 14 years ago, said the gatherings helped lift the quiet moments at home. "There are times when I feel lonely but it helps going to the Re-engage tea parties. I've made some friends there and there's always a lovely spread from the volunteers who are so kind. I get to hear everybody's news and have a lovely time."

### **Calls that make a difference**

Jo Kearns, 48, lives in Epsom and volunteers as a Call Companion, making weekly calls to Irene, 79, who lives alone. "She gets very anxious about things. Her friends are dying so she can be a bit isolated but the phone calls seem to help. She's



happier by the time we've ended our chat," she said. "I enjoy the volunteering because I like to help vulnerable people. It must be horrible to be alone and worried so I want to do whatever I can. In fact I'm thinking of taking on another older person after Christmas."

### 'Marvellous job'

Jenny Willott, CEO of Re-engage, said: "Our volunteers in Epsom and Ewell do a marvellous job, making sure some of our most vulnerable older people can find new friends and socialise. The fact they have been doing this for 60 years is astonishing."

### Interested in helping?

Volunteer opportunities supporting older people locally and remotely can be found on the Re-engage website.

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## QEF to Close After 90 Years as Epsom MP Seeks Answers

13 February 2026



The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People (QEF), the long-established disability charity based in Leatherhead, has announced it will enter administration after a 28-day wind-down period, bringing an end to more than nine decades of specialist support for people with disabilities in Surrey and across the country.

QEF said the decision follows "severe financial challenges" and comes after a year of exploring options to stabilise its position. The charity supports nearly 10,000 people annually through neuro-rehabilitation, mobility services and specialist residential care.

Founded in 1934 with the support of the then-Duchess of York (who became Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother), QEF has been a significant presence in the local community for generations. Its closure raises immediate questions about the future care of residents and clients who rely on its services, and about the national pressures facing the disability-care sector.

Local Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire said she was "deeply saddened" by the announcement, calling QEF "a cornerstone of our community in Leatherhead" and praising the "wonderful person-centred care" provided by its staff. She said she had seen the charity's impact first-hand during a visit earlier this year.

According to QEF's own statements, the organisation has faced rising staffing costs, recruitment pressures, and funding constraints from statutory bodies. The charity reported that despite efforts to improve its financial position, "there wasn't a viable solution" to meet the scale of the challenge.

Mrs Maguire said she has been in "regular conversation" with QEF leadership in recent days to see whether a last-minute solution was possible. "It was conveyed to me that, sadly, the shutdown process is already fully in motion," she said. She confirmed she has written to the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the circumstances of the closure and the wider lessons for the sector.

Her immediate focus, she said, is "ensuring continuity of care for both patients and staff". QEF has said the 28-day wind-down period is intended to give time for residential clients to be found suitable alternative placements.

The charity's closure will leave a notable gap in specialist provision in the region. QEF employed around 250 people and operated from modern facilities in Leatherhead after a major redevelopment earlier in the decade. Its departure will add pressure to already stretched NHS and social care services that rely on external specialist providers.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: QEF street sign. Google street view



## Surrey to get a higher level of heart care

13 February 2026



Heart patients and the tiniest and most vulnerable babies across Surrey are set to benefit from major investment in local specialist services, following confirmation of a £3.2 million upgrade at Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Chertsey. Although the improvements are centred at St Peter's Hospital, the effects will be felt across the county, including by patients who would typically access services at Epsom.

The investment is being funded largely by Runnymede Borough Council's Community Infrastructure Levy, and will see the cardiac catheter-lab at St Peter's upgraded to deliver more complex and less invasive heart procedures at a faster rate. It will be complemented by a £296,000 refurbishment of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, which is the only Level 3 neonatal facility in Surrey. Councillor Robert King, co-leader of Runnymede Borough Council, stated to the BBC's LDRS: "For families, the moments when a loved one needs specialist care are when the NHS matters most. That is why this investment we have championed at St Peter's Hospital is so vital."

Across Surrey, hospitals offer a range of cardiac services. Epsom provides extensive inpatient and outpatient cardiology care, including angiograms, non-complex stenting, pacemakers, complex device implants and heart-failure treatment. However, for confirmed heart attacks and the most complex interventional procedures, patients are transferred to the regional heart-attack centre at St George's in London. Other Surrey hospitals, including East Surrey Hospital and the Royal Surrey in Guildford, also run catheter labs and offer broad specialist cardiology care, though not all services are identical between sites.

The enhancements at St Peter's therefore represent a significant expansion of Surrey's own capacity to deliver more advanced, less invasive heart procedures locally, reducing pressure on London hospitals and improving access for patients across the county. In neonatal care, the upgraded Level 3 unit will strengthen Surrey's ability to care for the sickest and most premature babies, with facilities designed to improve comfort, privacy and support for families during long and emotionally demanding stays.

Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals CEO, Louise Stead, stated to the BBC's LDRS: "These improvements will strengthen our ability to deliver timely, life-saving care in modern, purpose-built environments." The funding, described as one of the most significant local healthcare investments in recent years, is expected to deliver the improvements within the next two years.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey (Google)