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

Current

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey Uni Zebrafish Study Links Blood Pressure Drug to Potential ADHD Treatment

A commonly prescribed blood pressure medication could offer a safer alternative for treating ADHD symptoms, according to a new study involving the University of Surrey. The findings suggest that amlodipine, a well-established drug for managing hypertension, may help reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity, key characteristics of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

From Fish to Humans: Genetic Links in ADHD Research

The study, published in *Neuropsychopharmacology*, tested five potential drugs in rats genetically bred to exhibit ADHD-like symptoms. Of these, only amlodipine significantly reduced hyperactivity. To validate the findings, researchers turned to zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), an important model organism in neurological studies, which shares approximately **70% of its genes** with humans. The zebrafish trials confirmed that amlodipine reduces hyperactivity and impulsivity, and for the first time, researchers confirmed that the drug crosses the blood-brain barrier, directly influencing brain function.

Further analysis of human genetic data reinforced the findings, showing that ADHD is linked to calcium channels in the brain—the same targets of amlodipine. A review of UK-wide patient records further strengthened the case, revealing that individuals taking amlodipine reported fewer mood swings and a lower tendency for risk-taking behaviour.

Dr Matthew Parker, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, noted:
"Repurposing amlodipine, a well-established blood pressure medication, offers a promising and swift pathway to address ADHD symptoms. Our research indicates that, due to its existing approval and safety profile, amlodipine could be rapidly redeployed as a treatment option for ADHD, potentially providing relief to patients sooner than developing new medications."

Why Zebrafish? The Genetic Overlap with Humans

Zebrafish have become an invaluable model in medical research due to their high genetic similarity with humans. In fact, they share a greater proportion of their genes with humans than many might expect. Some examples include:

- **Chimpanzees** (~98-99%) – our closest genetic relatives.
- **Mice** (~85%) – widely used in biomedical research.
- **Dogs** (~84%) – studied for genetic diseases and neurological conditions.
- **Zebrafish** (~70%) – a crucial model for studying brain function and drug effects.
- **Fruit flies** (~60%) – key for understanding genetics and neurobiology.

Because of this genetic overlap, zebrafish are often used in drug discovery, particularly for neurological disorders. Their transparent embryos and rapid development allow scientists to study the effects of medications in real-time.

A Safer Alternative to Existing ADHD Medications?

Current ADHD treatments, such as stimulant medications, are effective but often come with significant side effects, including appetite loss, high blood pressure, headaches, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, stimulant medications carry a risk of misuse. Amlodipine, already widely prescribed and well-tolerated, could offer a new alternative with a safer profile.

With approximately **25% of ADHD patients not responding well to existing treatments**, the need for new options is urgent. If further clinical trials confirm these findings, amlodipine could be repurposed as an ADHD treatment much faster than developing a brand-new drug, providing relief for patients sooner.

The study highlights the importance of genetic research in understanding brain disorders and demonstrates how unlikely connections—such as a heart medication treating a neurodevelopmental condition—can lead to breakthroughs in medical science.

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

Current

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey Uni leads research to replace plastic with paper for liquids

A multimillion-pound research project, called SustaPack, aims to overcome manufacturing challenges for the next generation of sustainable, paper-based packaging for liquids. Backed by a £1 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) as part of UKRI's co-investing programme, packaging technology company Pulpex Ltd has joined forces with the University of Surrey to refine its manufacturing processes to provide a viable solution to plastic pollution.

Contributing matching support towards the project, Pulpex has already made significant strides in the development of its patented technology, which produces degradable bottles made from natural wood fibres. The packaging offers a sustainable alternative to traditional plastic materials and can be recycled in existing paper waste streams.

However, designing the next generation of production technology and materials requires novel and fundamental research to address current limitations, including new analytical techniques to improve product quality, optimising performance and reducing in-process imperfections.

Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex, said:

"We're excited to strengthen our existing collaboration with the University of Surrey to enhance our technologies and processes. Our SustaPack partnership will help us advance safe, sustainable packaging solutions, enabling brand owners to meet Net-Zero targets. It gives consumers sustainable choices, delivers answers for brand owners, and enables supply chains and retailers to deliver their carbon footprint reduction goals – a priority for all."

A key feature of the packaging is its multi-layered barrier coating, which prevents contained liquid from leaking, as well as inward oxygen permeation, maintaining high-quality products for consumers. To create a step-change in the energy usage in methods used to apply these coatings, the researchers plan to develop innovative processes that consume less energy and water while increasing the shelf life of packaged goods.

Professor Joseph Keddie, from the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics, and Fellow of the Institute for Sustainability, said:

"Over the past couple of years, I have forged a close relationship with Pulpex as a Royal Society Industry Fellow, and I am enthusiastic about strengthening our ties through our SustaPack Partnership.

"Our aim here is to combine novel coating processes, mechanistic modelling, computer vision and artificial intelligence (AI) to establish a 'dry' spray coating process that deposits food-safe, degradable coatings. This technology, which isn't yet commercially available, will not only drive the next generation of packaging technology but will also contribute to a significant reduction in plastic pollution and lower carbon emissions from manufacturing."

A multi-disciplinary team of researchers will explore the feasibility of using thermal imaging to detect defects in wet coatings as they occur, enabling immediate corrections using AI. Multi-scale mechanistic models of the coating process will be employed to identify the sources of imperfections and non-uniformities and then eliminate them to ensure optimal packaging performance.

By applying innovative computer vision techniques powered by AI, the project aims to identify production defects in real-time, optimise materials and processes, and achieve 100% reliability in the manufactured products.

The outcomes of the project could set new standards for environmentally friendly packaging, helping brand owners reduce their environmental impact amidst ever-increasing environmental regulations – while offering consumers eco-friendly options to help fight against plastic pollution.

From left to right: Dr Hui Luo and Professor Robert Dorey (University of Surrey's School of Engineering); Professor Joseph Keddie (University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics); Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex; Barrie Harvey, COO at Pulpex; Dr Simon Hadfield (University of Surrey's Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing); Professor Charley Wu (University of Surrey's School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering).

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

Current

ISSN 2753-2771

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell Delivers Crucial Support Amid Rising Cost-of-Living Pressures

Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has revealed the scale of its impact over the past year, with thousands of local residents receiving support on a range of pressing financial and social issues. From benefits and debt advice to housing support, the charity continues to be a lifeline for many struggling to make ends meet.

A Year of Helping the Community

Figures released by CAEE highlight just how vital their work has been. In 2024 alone, the organisation:

- Assisted **3,394 people** with **10,233 issues**
- Made **12,406 client and third-party contacts**
- Secured **£1,022,934** in additional income for clients

For January 2025, the demand for support has surged even further:

- **560 people** received help in just one month
- **1,036 issues** were handled
- **£159,670** in extra income was secured for struggling households

The most common concerns among residents remain **benefits, tax credits, housing, and debt**, reflecting the ongoing financial pressures facing families in Epsom & Ewell.

Expanding Outreach in 2025

With the rising cost of living continuing to bite, CAEE is set to expand its **energy outreach programme** to better reach underrepresented communities. The initiative aims to provide guidance on **energy bills, debt support, benefit checks, and energy-saving advice**, ensuring that vulnerable individuals can access the help they need.

The charity is also distributing funds from the **Household Support Fund** until March 2025, offering financial aid to those on low incomes. Residents struggling with essential costs are urged to get in touch before the deadline.

Making a Real Difference

Beyond statistics, the impact of Citizens Advice is best illustrated through the experiences of those they have helped. One such case involved a **vulnerable client** living in unsuitable accommodation, battling rent arrears and struggling with multiple health concerns.

With extensive support from CAEE, she was able to:

- Repay her rent arrears
- Secure a move to a more suitable **ground-floor flat**
- Receive **medical and financial assistance**
- Successfully challenge a dispute through the **Energy Ombudsman**

This intervention not only improved her living conditions but also stabilised her finances, demonstrating the charity's commitment to holistic, long-term support.

Financial and Social Impact

CAEE's work delivers significant savings to public services, including:

- **£186,802** in NHS savings by reducing demand on mental health and GP services

ISSN 2753-2771

- **£550,131** in savings for the **Department for Work and Pensions** by helping people stay in work
- **£326,078** saved for **housing providers** by preventing evictions

In total, their advice and interventions generated a staggering **£3.85 million** in value for the local economy.

Looking Ahead: Advocacy and Research in 2025

Beyond direct support, CAEE also plays a key role in influencing policy and addressing systemic issues. In 2025, they will continue to campaign on critical concerns such as:

- **The cost-of-living crisis**
- **Housing shortages and homelessness prevention**
- **Debt, including rising council tax arrears**
- **Access to health and disability benefits**

A key event on the horizon is **Citizens Advice Data Insights**, taking place on 25th February 2025, where experts will discuss how accumulated debt is preventing people from rebuilding their lives.

Support Your Local Citizens Advice

With demand for services higher than ever, Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell is calling for public support. Running the service costs over **£100 per client per year**, and donations play a crucial role in ensuring free advice remains available.

Residents can contribute by donating as little as **£10 a month**, helping to sustain a vital service that continues to transform lives across the borough.

For **free, confidential advice**, visit CAEE at The Old Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, or call **0808 278 7963**.

Young Artists Brighten Up Tattenham Corner Station

Passengers at Tattenham Corner station will soon be welcomed by a brand-new display of artwork, thanks to a creative collaboration between local students and The Arts Society Epsom.

Led by Carol Skelton, Arts Coordinator, Year 6 students from Epsom Downs Community School have explored block printing and etching on polystyrene sheets to create Greek vase designs inspired by renowned printmaker Patrick Caulfield's *Pottery 1969*.

The project has been supported by The Arts Society Epsom, with Angie Child, Head of Young Arts Volunteering, overseeing the initiative. It follows the launch of a permanent art display at Epsom Station in October 2024, created by students from Nescot College of Technology.

Part of the national **Art@TheStation** initiative, the project is backed by The Arts Society's head office in London and funded by Southern Railway. The goal is to showcase local primary school artwork, bringing creativity into public spaces and enriching the experience of travelers passing through the station.

Next time you're at Tattenham Corner station, take a moment to admire the talent and creativity of these young artists!

Parents lose trust in Surrey state "school family" admission priority

A Surrey suburb is up in arms as an 'oustanding' secondary school could change its admissions, making it more tricky for local children to get a place.

ISSN 2753-2771

Consultation for the new admissions for September 2025 at Hinchley Wood School, in Esher, ends on Wednesday 22 January. If approved, the academy school would prioritise students who attend the schools within its own trust- Hinchley Wood Primary School and Thames Ditton Junior School- leaving Long Ditton St Mary's Junior School and Claygate Primary School lower down the pecking order.

But parents of Long Ditton St Mary's Junior are furious their child could lose a place at the only local state school in the area. Children who attend Long Ditton St Mary's Junior School have traditionally gone to Hinchley Wood Secondary School, but the admission changes could see local students deprioritised from their closest high school and forced to go elsewhere.

The 'outstanding' Ofsted-rated school frequently comes as one of the top places in Surrey. Ben Bartlett, CEO of Hinchley Wood Learning Partnership Trust, said he had "massive sympathy" for those worried about the proposed changes and understood parents always want their child to get into the "best" school.

An academy trust, Hinchley Wood School is legally and financially one organisation so it shares resources such as safeguarding, SEND provision, disadvantaged learners and educational subjects like French, Music and P.E with trust schools. Mr Bartlett argued giving the two primary schools priority keeps children and their parents "in the Hinchley Wood [trust] family".

Mr Bartlett and Co-Headteacher Ms Maria Cachia explained keeping students in the trust means any safeguarding information or education can be easily transferred as schools have "shared values and strategic aims".

Now, parents say they are having to decide whether to send their children to the Ofsted-rated 'good' Thames Ditton primary school to have a better chance of going to Hinchley Wood, or to send them to the 'outstanding' Long Ditton St Mary's Junior. One dad said it was like "you've got a gun to your head from the local state school".

Shaya's son goes to Thames Ditton Infant School. He said his family has been "torturing ourselves for eight months" to decide which junior school to send him to in the hopes of getting a good secondary school place which could have a "profound impact" on his longterm future. Shaya said: "We're being forced to choose whether to prioritise our son's immediate educational means at the sacrifice of his long-term education."

Shaya, who lives less than 1km away from the secondary school, said: "The withdrawal of the catchment area clearly demonstrates the Trust wants to prioritise children who do not live locally over local children, and its own financial health." But the senior leadership at Hinchley Wood argued it would not be fair for children attending a primary school within the Trust to not proceed to the secondary school just because they live out of the catchment area.

Antony Warren, parent of two children at Long Ditton St Mary's Infant School, said it is "wholly unfair" for the academy to change its admissions suddenly. He said: "We moved, we invested significant life savings into our house and in the community as a whole [so] we knew we were in the catchment area."

If children do not get accepted into Hinchley Wood Secondary, the next nearest school could be in Kingston where the council has no obligation to accept Surrey pupils. While the Long Ditton students could walk down the road to the secondary school, they may have to get the bus for 30-45 minutes to Esher High or a Kingston school. "I pay my taxes," said Antony, "I feel my children deserve the right to go to their local state school."

For many of the young children their first years of education were riddled with Covid and lockdowns, leading to disrupted education and interrupted friendships. Some children now struggle with anxiety and stress, which many parents fear will be exacerbated if the kids start new secondary schools out of the local area where they will not know anyone.

A tight and close-knit community, parents said the Dittons and Hinchley Wood are entangled together with sports teams and extracurricular groups. Preventing children from going to the local secondary school fractures these ties and uproots them from their social connections.

"It's just not right that a multi-academy trust can just wield its power and prioritise their own schools for their own benefits for their own financial gains [and] totally disregarding the needs of the local community," said Annette Whymark, who has a son in Year 4. Annette and her husband James Whymark started the action group to spread the word in the Thames Ditton community.

The campaign group, made up of around 65 parents, feared changing the admissions could disperse children into Surrey and Kingston, causing a ripple effect on school admissions. Parents understood those at Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton primary schools will be in favour of the admissions change because "they want to do what is best for their children". However, they emphasised it as "grossly unfair".

Some argued that the Hinchley Wood's consultation is "financially driven" because it prioritises the primary schools within their trust by encouraging parents to send their children to that school. By increasing the pupil number, the school will get more funding from the government.

ISSN 2753-2771

Mr Bartlett disagreed the consultation was motivated by financial gain, and stressed the student admission number for the two primary schools was actually being lowered in line with a falling birth rate.

Based on school admission data from Surrey County Council, Mr Bartlett and Mrs Hogan told the LDRS there would be a "minimal" impact in the number of students from Long Ditton entering the school. The CEO said the area was "blessed with a spread of fantastic schools" from Esher to Kingston, where children can frequently get local buses to school.

"This is a genuine consultation and no decision has been made yet," said Mr Bartlett. After the consultation finishes, the responses will be read and considered by the governors and trustees for the school.

Monica Harding MP for Esher and Walton, said she was concerned about the impact of the proposed admission changes and has shared these with Ben Bartlett. She said: "I have urged HWS to explore alternatives that better serve local families. I will continue to speak with the leadership at HWS on this issue.

"I have also raised these issues in both meetings and written correspondence with the DfE and Surrey CC. The DfE assured me that they are taking these concerns seriously and will "monitor and work with the trust and Surrey County Council to ensure no schools are made vulnerable by such changes if they occur."

"I am very aware of the anxiety these proposals are causing parents, and I remain committed to advocating for solutions that keep the best interests of our children at the forefront and ensure all of our local schools are thriving. I encourage all parents to participate in the consultation process to help ensure the final decision reflects the needs of our community."

"I also recognise that local schools are facing huge financial strain and that they are all challenged to deliver high-quality education without commensurate funding. I will continue to push the Government hard to provide the resources necessary for our children to have the best possible education."

Campaigners outside Long Ditton Infant school. (Credit: Emma Pericas Sims)

Surrey Uni to lead on speech to sign GBT computer programme

A large-language model (LLM) built to meet the needs of the Deaf community, translating between signed and spoken language, is the aim of a new project led by the University of Surrey.

SignGPT: Building Generative Predictive Transformers for Sign Language has been awarded £8.45m from the UK Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council. The five-year project will build tools to allow spoken language to be automatically translated into photo-realistic sign language and video of sign language to be translated into spoken language – a complex translation problem that is yet to be solved.

Surrey will work alongside the University of Oxford, the Deafness Cognition and the Language Research Centre at University College London, key Deaf stakeholders, and the Deaf community.

Professor Richard Bowden, Principal Investigator of the project from the University of Surrey's Institute for People-Centred AI, said:

"Large language models such as those behind ChatGPT and Gemini are transforming many aspects of our personal and working lives – and that transformation is happening at a blistering pace. Our project, SignGPT, is not about replacing humans, but it is about ensuring the Deaf community is not left behind in this revolution.

"By creating technology that serves the community, we're enabling equal access to information, working towards seamless communication between the Deaf and hearing world, and demonstrating that AI can be a tool for inclusivity and empowerment. SignGPT isn't just about accessibility for Deaf people – it's about setting a standard for how innovation can address inequities, strengthen human connection, and build a more inclusive society. In a world shaped by rapid technological change, projects like this show that AI's potential is greatest when it uplifts everyone."

Globally, there are around 70 million Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals, many of whom use sign language as their primary form of communication. For many, written/spoken languages serve as a second or third language, and proficiency in these languages can vary. There is no universal sign language: sign languages are natural human languages created over centuries by Deaf communities and are not derived from spoken languages. Their underlying rules and structures remain a rich area of linguistic

ISSN 2753-2771

study. Each sign language has its own unique grammar and lexicon, relying on both manual gestures (hands) and non-manual expressions (body and face), along with spatial elements, to convey meaning.

Professor Bencie Woll, sign linguist, co-investigator of the project, and founder of the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at UCL, said:

"This project is a unique collaboration between vision scientists and sign linguists with Deaf and hearing researchers working together towards our common goals."

Mark Wheatley, CEO of the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), said:

"I am pleased that this important grant will empower the Deaf community to have further equal access by harnessing AI and large language models. We will ensure that the University of Surrey, Oxford University, and the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at UCL, alongside Deaf-led stakeholders such as RAD, take a people-centred approach to ensuring ethical responsibility and the accuracy of translations so that we, the Deaf community, can use them for everyday purposes."

Professor Kearsy Cormier, one of the Co-Investigators on the project from University College London, said:

"So much work in sign language technology is undertaken by researchers with no understanding of how sign languages work, nor any lived experience of deafness themselves. This project will allow real co-creation/co-development of this technology with Deaf and hearing researchers in linguistics and deaf studies working alongside computer vision specialists – with each group learning from each other – and, importantly, building capacity amongst Deaf researchers so they may lead this field in the future."

SignGPT's research team will produce the largest sign language dataset in the world and use it to build a sign language LLM that can provide the breadth of application to the Deaf community that current LLMs provide for written/spoken languages. In doing so, the project will also generate tools for data annotation that will be released for use by the wider community. The project already has Deaf members within both the research team and wider partners, but it is hoping to recruit more staff for whom British Sign Language is their primary language.

The challenge of automatically translating between sign languages and spoken languages is highly complex and remains unsolved. SignGPT will produce open-source toolkits for linguistic use, web-based demonstrations for accessible knowledge exchange and run outreach programmes alongside collaborative workshops.

Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust Calls Out Delays to New Hospital Programme

The long-awaited specialist emergency care hospital for southwest London and Surrey has faced yet another setback following the Government's announcement about delays to the national New Hospital Programme. Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust has voiced strong concerns over the consequences of these delays, which they warn could have dire implications for patient care and infrastructure safety.

Health Secretary **Wes Streeting** outlined the revised timeline, stating that the New Hospital Programme, initially set for completion by 2030, will now proceed in four phases. Notably, nine schemes under the programme will not commence construction until between 2035 and 2039. Streeting emphasized the need for a "firm footing with sustainable funding" to ensure all projects are delivered.

A Legacy of Promises and Delays

The proposed hospital in Sutton, intended to centralize critical emergency services for Epsom, St Helier, and the surrounding areas, was approved in 2020 as part of the Government's pledge to deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030. Initially, the Sutton facility was set to open by 2025. However, delays have since pushed this date to 2027 "at the earliest," with recent announcements suggesting construction may not begin until much later in the decade.

This latest postponement has sparked frustration within the Trust. **Dr James Marsh**, Group Deputy Chief Executive of the St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, did not hold back in his criticism:

> *"After decades of false promises, the people of southwest London and Surrey have been let down once again. Every year we delay adds up to £150m to the cost of a new hospital and keeping the current buildings safe to provide care."*

ISSN 2753-2771

Critical State of Current Facilities

The Trust has long highlighted the challenges posed by the aging infrastructure at Epsom and St Helier hospitals. Dr Marsh provided a stark assessment of the situation:

> *"We have already had to condemn and demolish one of our wards. It's only a matter of time before other parts of our hospital become unsafe for treating patients. We now need to plan and prepare for the catastrophic failure of our buildings, which could mean moving patient care into temporary buildings."*

Dr Marsh extended an invitation to Health Secretary Wes Streeting to visit the hospitals and witness the deteriorating state of the facilities firsthand:

> *"If the health secretary thinks we can continue to care for patients for 10 years in this building, we invite Wes Streeting to come and see the state of the estate himself."*

Financial Burden of Delays

The financial impact of the delays has been severe. According to the Trust, inflation and the cost of maintaining outdated buildings have driven up expenses by £150 million annually. These costs are expected to rise further as the timeline for the new hospital stretches into the 2030s.

The Trust's frustration echoes broader concerns from healthcare leaders across the country. NHS Providers interim Chief Executive Saffron Cordery described the delays as "a bitter pill to swallow," while Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation, warned that prolonged delays would result in higher costs and increased pressure on services.

The Plan for the New Hospital

Despite these setbacks, the Trust remains committed to its "Building Your Future Hospitals" programme. The plan aims to consolidate six major acute services—including A&E, maternity, and paediatrics—into the new Sutton facility, while upgrading Epsom and St Helier hospitals to provide enhanced outpatient, diagnostic, and rehabilitation services. Both existing hospitals will retain 24/7 urgent treatment centres to support local needs.

Call for Action

The delays to the New Hospital Programme have fuelled local frustration, with many questioning the Government's commitment to fulfilling its promises. As Dr Marsh emphasized, the cost of inaction is not just financial but could also jeopardize the safety and quality of care for thousands of patients.

For further details on the Trust's plans and timelines, visit Building Your Future Hospitals. Images of the facilities, illustrating their current state, are available alongside video footage upon request.

Related reports:

Prime Minister and Health Secretary Visit Epsom Hospital to Unveil NHS Recovery Blueprint

Has Epsom's new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

Epsom and St Helier Hospitals in Desperate Need of Repairs

Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future

Epsom Hospital upgrade at risk?

Image: St Helier Hospital

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

Current

ISSN 2753-2771

New family mediation in Epsom

Relate Mid and East Surrey Launches New Family Mediation Service

Relate Mid and East Surrey is thrilled to announce the launch of its new family mediation service, designed to help families resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively. This service reflects our commitment to offering practical, affordable solutions for families in our community.

What Is Mediation?

Mediation is a process where an independent, professional mediator helps families work through disagreements over parenting, property, or finances following separation. Unlike court proceedings, mediation focuses on collaboration, ensuring all parties have a voice and reach mutually beneficial solutions. It's quicker, less stressful, and often far less expensive than legal action.

How Mediation Helps

Mediation provides a structured and supportive environment where families can address issues such as parenting arrangements, property division, and financial agreements. It is quicker, less stressful, and significantly cheaper than going to court, allowing families to maintain control over their decisions.

Key Benefits:

- Helps you make arrangements about parenting, property, and money.
- Is less stressful than going to court.
- Saves you money as it's usually much cheaper than being represented in court.
- Puts your child's interests first.
- Helps you move on quickly to the next stage of your life.

Debbie Holden, Chief Executive of Relate Mid and East Surrey, explains:
"Family mediation is about empowering people to create solutions that work for everyone involved. Our mediators guide families through difficult conversations, ensuring children's needs remain at the forefront while reducing the emotional and financial burden of conflict."

Flexible and Affordable Options

Our new service includes private assessment meetings and joint mediation sessions, tailored to meet each family's unique needs. We offer a sliding scale of fees to ensure affordability, with additional support through the Family Mediation Voucher Scheme, providing up to £500 for child arrangement cases.

Key Features:

- **Child-inclusive mediation** to give children a voice in the process.
- **Rapid appointments**, often within a week.
- A focus on **long-term solutions** that foster positive co-parenting relationships.

Join Us for Family Mediation Week

Family Mediation Week (27–31 January) highlights the importance of mediation in resolving family disputes. We encourage families to explore how this service can support them during life transitions.

More information can be found at:
https://relatemidandeastsurrey.co.uk/family-mediation/

ISSN 2753-2771

Contact Us

To book a mediation session or learn more, contact us at:

- **Reigate Office:** 01737 245212 | admin@relatemidandeastsurrey.co.uk
- **Epsom Office:** 01372 722976 | epsomadmin@relatemidandeastsurrey.co.uk

Image – illustration only.

Tackling health inequalities in Surrey

Surrey County Council has been awarded 5 years of funding by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to create a **Health Determinants Research Collaboration** (HDRC). The £5m funding will help the local authority to build capacity to do research on prevention and create a culture of using evidence in making decisions.

NIHR HDRC Surrey's vision is to improve health of our residents and reduce health inequalities which are driven by the social determinants of health. To achieve this, the HDRC Surrey will use the funding to enhance local research capacity, drive research on prevention and public health where evidence isn't yet available. It will also embed a culture of evidence-informed decision-making which is based on local knowledge underpinned by community involvement and issues that matter most to our residents.

HDRC Surrey is a partnership between the council, the University of Surrey, and voluntary and community partners. Together, over the next five years, we will focus on:

• Improving our research governance and infrastructure
• Building research capacity and providing training support
• Supporting knowledge mobilisation
• Conducting robust research that reflects the needs and experiences of local communities
• Embedding meaningful public involvement at the heart of Surrey HDRC's work

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *"This ambitious project will facilitate a rigorous focus on health inequalities in Surrey. The substantial funding will ensure sustainability in our approach. We already work closely with the University of Surrey and this research programme will build on our existing relationship to provide people locally with better opportunities and outcomes."*

Councillor Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, and Public Health, said: *"Improving the wellbeing of residents across Surrey is something that we all strive to achieve. Prevention is the key to a better and healthier place to live and to achieve this we need to know where and how best to invest money and resources. This new funding will enable a fantastic partnership between the council, the University of Surrey and voluntary and community sector to strengthen our research infrastructure. The new research infrastructure will be invaluable in guiding and informing decision-making that will have a real, positive impact on our residents' lives leaving no one left behind."*

Professor Lisa Collins Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation at University of Surrey, said: *"The University of Surrey is thrilled to partner with the local authority and involve the community on this vital health research collaboration. The funding will empower us to conduct impactful research that addresses the unique health challenges faced by residents."*

Ruth Hutchinson, Surrey County Council's Director of Public Health, said: *"The NIHR grant is exciting as it will enable us to work more collaboratively with the University of Surrey, Districts and Boroughs and local communities to directly meet people's health needs in Surrey, leading to better outcomes."*

Why Surrey?

Although Surrey is seen to be one of the most affluent parts of the UK, there are areas with high levels of deprivation associated with poor health. In 2020, someone living in the most deprived area of Surrey is likely to live 10 years less than someone living in the most affluent part of the county. To address this, we need to better understand how factors like the built environment, housing and the economy affect people's health in Surrey. Our Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) will help us to do this.

HDRC Surrey will improve how, as a local authority, we use research to get a better understanding of what works and for whom

ISSN 2753-2771

to reduce health inequalities.

Image courtesy: RDNE Stock project

Surrey University leading on alternative ADHD treatment

A multisite clinical trial has launched in the United States to investigate whether non-pharmaceutical methods can be used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children ages 7-12. This trial is currently recruiting new patients and seeking FDA clearance.

The trial uses a wearable device – Novostim 2 – developed by Innosphere Engineering Ltd. The company anticipates FDA clearance by Q3 of 2025 and has already received approval for sales in Israel.

The novel treatment builds upon years of research into non-invasive brain stimulation techniques led by the University of Surrey's Professor Roi Cohen Kadosh. The research team carried out multiple studies in which children with ADHD were treated with transcranial Random Noise Stimulation (tRNS) coupled with cognitive training (CT).

tRNS is a non-invasive technique that delivers a weak and painless electrical signal to the brain to enhance activity in regions associated with attention. In the studies, children who received tRNS and CT experienced significant improvements in their ADHD symptoms, working memory, and processing speed, along with changes in their brain activity, which could be linked to the improvement of their symptoms in the long-term.

Two clinical trials have been completed using Novostim 2 at Hadassah Medical Center in children aged 7-12, which showed significant improvement in ADHD symptoms, including a 43% reduction in ADHD symptom severity and overall symptom alleviation.

The trial, over a two-week period, involves 20-minute treatment sessions in which Novostim 2 is used to deliver tRNS over specific regions in the brain associated with ADHD and during which participants engage in attention-based digital games.

For more information on the latest trial, visit ADHDtrial.com

Professor Roi Cohen Kadosh, Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Surrey, said:

"We were thrilled by the success of the previous clinical trials, which brought us one step closer to providing a safe and effective non-pharmaceutical option for children with ADHD. The device's ability to modulate brain activity and enhance cognitive functions may hold the key to long-lasting benefits, potentially reshaping the landscape of ADHD treatment. By harnessing the power of psychology, neuroscience, and technology, we can empower young patients to improve their focus, attention and overall wellbeing. The need continues to grow, and I hope to see this technology become available to many children and their families soon."

Rami Shacour, co-Founder and CEO of Innosphere, adds:

"For decades, stimulant medications have been the cornerstone of ADHD treatment. At Innosphere, we're parents first, driven by a mission to give families more personalized, effective options for their children. With Novostim 2, we're redefining what's possible in ADHD care. We're thrilled to announce sales approval in Israel and eagerly anticipate FDA clearance this year. This is just the beginning, as we explore Novostim 2's potential to complement existing therapies and transform lives."

Image: Professor **Roi Cohen Kadosh**