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Reducing food waste nationally and in Epsom and Ewell

10 October 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Sam Jones – Reporter



Image courtesy High Speed Training

“Outstanding” rating for Worcester Park based carers

10 October 2025



Trinity Homecare Group is delighted to announce that its Worcester Park-based visiting care service has been awarded an ‘Outstanding’ rating by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following a recent inspection.

The CQC awarded the service **Outstanding in four of the five key areas** – Well-led, Caring, Effective and Responsive – placing it among a *tiny handful* of homecare providers nationally to achieve this level of recognition.

A service at the heart of the community

Inspectors praised the service for being “exceptionally personalised and kind,” with carers and managers going above and beyond to support local people in their daily lives. The Worcester Park branch provides visiting care to individuals and families across Surrey, including communities in Cobham, Walton, Weybridge, Byfleet, Addlestone, Epsom, Banstead, Kingston, Tadworth, Ashtead, Leatherhead, New Malden, Surbiton, Thames Ditton, Molesey and Chessington.

Highlights from the inspection report included:

- Helping clients maintain independence, with flexible support tailored around their daily routines.
- Supporting people to enjoy life’s small but meaningful moments – from feeding ducks and gardening, to celebrating birthdays.
- Spotting health needs early and working with families and local professionals to ensure the right support is in place.
- Embracing new technology and creative initiatives such as *Stories for Life*, enabling people to capture their personal history and strengthen family connections.

Celebrating local carers

“Families in our local communities trust us not just to provide safe care, but to make every day more meaningful,” said **Carla Gama, Director of Operations at Trinity Homecare Group**.

“That is thanks to the incredible work of our carers here in Worcester Park and across Surrey. They bring compassion, kindness and professionalism into people’s homes every single day, and this Outstanding rating is truly theirs to celebrate.”

Summer Smith, Registered Branch Manager at Worcester Park, added:

“I am so proud of our team here. Every carer and support staff member goes above and beyond to make sure people feel safe, valued and cared for in the way they want. This rating reflects their dedication and the strong relationships they build with clients and families in our local communities.”

About Trinity Homecare Group

Trinity Homecare Group is one of the UK’s leading providers of live-in and visiting homecare, supporting people to live independently and safely in the comfort of their own homes. With over 25 years of experience and a growing national footprint, Trinity continues to set the standard for high-quality, person-centred care.

The Group includes a family of trusted brands: Trinity Homecare, Country Cousins and Patricia White’s – together

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spanning fully managed, regulated live-in and visiting care, as well as introductory agency live-in and visiting care services across the UK.

Learn more or view the full CQC report: www.trinityhomecare.co.uk

[Copy prepared by Trinity Home Care.]

Surrey Uni to open in India after UK PM’s visit

10 October 2025



Surrey joins new UK Universities in India Alliance while on UK trade mission to India

The UK’s universities can be a “skills and research accelerator” for the potential of the strengthening UK–India trade partnership, which was the focus of Sir Keir Starmer’s trade mission this week. This is according to Professor Stephen Jarvis, newly appointed President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey – and a participant in the trade mission.

On his return from India, where the multi-sector delegation met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Professor Jarvis highlighted the strong fit of the University of Surrey’s ‘purpose-driven’ approach to education and research, and the importance of the new Universities in India Alliance, which Surrey was proud to become a founder member of during the trip.

During the visit, the University of Surrey was presented with approval in principle from IFSCA (International Financial Services Centres Authority) to proceed with opening a new International Branch Campus at GIFT City, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat State.

On the trip, the University also celebrated its network of research and education partnerships with Indian universities – including its partnership with the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (IISc) – which will see both institutions partner to drive research and innovation in semiconductor chip design and medical research, with a particular focus on human health and veterinary medicine.

Professor Stephen Jarvis said:

“I was honoured to be invited to join the Prime Minister on his visit to India to celebrate the enormous potential for UK higher education to partner and collaborate in India to drive international skills development and research to solve global challenges. India is an economic and skills superpower – it has its own thriving higher education sector, but also recognises the value that Britain’s globally recognised higher education sector can bring to meeting the extraordinary growth in demand for quality education in India.

“As we move towards opening our new campus in GIFT City, we’re delighted to have been invited to become founding members of the nine-strong UK Universities in India Alliance. Education is an immensely important export industry for the UK, and Surrey is proud to be standing shoulder to shoulder with our fellow universities, bringing our own unique brand of purposeful education, as we seek to expand the potential for higher education to be a skills and research accelerator, benefitting both the UK and Indian economies.”

Alison Barrett MBE, Country Director India, British Council, said:

“Congratulations to the University of Surrey on receiving approval in principle from IFSCA (International Financial Services Centres Authority) to establish its International Branch Campus in GIFT City, Ahmedabad, India. This reflects the UK’s commitment to accessible, innovative, and inclusive education, but also demonstrates the positive impact of the National Education Policy 2020. Aligned with the shared ambition outlined in the India-UK Vision 2035, bringing Surrey’s expertise to India will create exciting new opportunities for students and equip them with the skills needed to thrive in the future.”

Surrey University

Image: 09/10/2025. Mumbai, India. Prime Minister Keir Starmer meets Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a bilateral meeting at the Raj Bhavan. Picture by Simon Dawson / No 10 Downing Street

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Get paid for falling over in Surrey study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Surrey University

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A snapshot of Romany Gypsy life in Woking

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Written and visual sources for the lived experience of Romany Gypsies in the county are rare so a collection of copy photographs of the Baker family of Sunridge/Sundridge Camp, Old Woking, and a memoir written by Rose Baker (later Burch) recalling her family's life there, make for an extraordinary testimony (reference 10066/1/9). Rose (born 1918) was a twin and one of 13 children of James and Clara Baker. Gems in the collection include a handwritten list of where she and her siblings were born, including in tents, in a meadow by Old Woking cemetery and in 'the little field by the river near the park which is now overgrown' (10066/1/6).Nellie Violet & Rose Baker Jackmans Nursery

The Bakers and other families in the camp worked for Mr Carter at his farm in Kingfield. The work was arduous, and Gypsies provided cheap labour as they were generally not well paid. From the age of 14, Rose worked at Cartbridge Laundry, then at Jackman and Son's Nursery in Egley Road, where some of her sisters were already employed. Annually in September, the family would travel to Hampshire for the hop-picking season. New building byelaws and public health concerns meant that by 1931 Woking Urban District Council compulsorily purchased the privately owned land which the encampment stood on and a year later evicted its nine resident families. The Bakers moved into settled accommodation in Westfield. Rose's son Geoff used her memoir to research his Romany roots and, in the process, collated a whole collection revealing a fascinating insight into their lifestyle. The collection will be a huge help to enquirers tracing their own Gypsy ancestry.

A game of cat and mouse?



This intriguing drawing was discovered among records of Greenfield School, Woking, recently deposited before the school's merger with Hoe Bridge School (10768/1/2/2). The pencil sketch, depicting a cat teacher with a classroom of mice pupils, is captioned, 'But when her Highness is near, Dear Cat you need have no fear'.

Who is the Cat examining the maths paper in her hand, and who is 'her Highness'? Helpfully, though, all the mice are all individually named, including K Green (creator of the artwork) and K Barbier (whose name appears on the maths paper).

The mystery is further deepened by a cryptic poem that accompanies the drawing:
Cat poem

Now look amidst the senior mice,
Serene and calm Her Royal Highness stands,
How could you Cat, suggest these mice
Would game and play in little bands.
Never, never could the Girls' School mice
Be other than polite and nice
When such a Highness took command
And ruled with love that lively band
Dear Cat, in all humility we you advise
To show our portrait (we're sure that's wise)
To that same Royal Highness who here stands
And say you're sorry – we feel she'll understand.

We think the drawing dates from the early 1940s, as some of the names have been traced on the 1939 Register as born

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around 1926 to 1927, and were most likely senior pupils, as the poem suggests. This was before the school was purchased by Ockenden Venture founders, Joyce Pearce and Ruth Hicks (in 1948), so we are no closer to identifying ‘Cat’ and ‘Her Royal Highness’. If you can help us solve this enigma, we would love to hear from you!

Surrey History Centre.

Read about many other rich and varied events from Surrey History Centre HERE

Cuddington birdwatch could go Epsom and Ewell Borough-wide?

10 October 2025



What started as a local experiment in Cuddington has grown into one of Epsom and Ewell’s liveliest community-led wildlife projects.

After hearing news of the planned Grafton Stables nature reserve, local councillor and Heritage Champion **Kim Spickett** (RA Cuddington) invited members of the resident-led ERLIBIRD group (Elmstead Red Listed Bird Project) to help track bird and wildlife sightings in local gardens and parks.

A handful of streets joined in at first – but the idea quickly took off. A growing list of sightings is now published online as a **Cuddington Bioguide** (view here), with residents of all ages contributing.

“People are genuinely surprised by how much wildlife we have right here on our doorsteps,” Cllr Spickett told the *Epsom and Ewell Times*. “Smartphones and our street WhatsApp groups – originally just for neighbourhood watch – have given everyone the chance to learn, share and get involved. It’s sociable, it’s educational, and it brings real joy to people who might not be able to get outdoors themselves.”

A ‘nature superhighway’ through the borough

The Hogsmill River, cutting through the borough towards the Thames, provides the backbone for what residents have dubbed a “nature superhighway”. New initiatives such as a mammal tunnel at Malden Manor and fish passes along the river mean that creatures from bats to kingfishers can navigate the area more safely. The forthcoming Grafton Stables reserve is expected to act as a “service station” for migrating birds using the Hogsmill as a flight path.

Suburban gardens, railway embankments and small urban green spaces all play their part in supporting biodiversity. Conservation work in neighbouring boroughs Sutton and Kingston also influences what residents see in Cuddington, underlining how ecological networks cut across council boundaries.

Citizen science in action

The Cuddington Bioguide is part of a wider movement often described as “citizen science” – where local knowledge and volunteer time help build valuable datasets for conservationists.

Across Surrey, residents are already engaged in projects such as **tree-mapping by EETAB** (details here), seasonal species guides from the **Surrey Wildlife Trust** (visit here), and river monitoring supported by the **South East Rivers Trust**.

Digital tools have accelerated the trend. Facebook groups such as the **Hogsmill Nature Reserve** page have become hubs where experts and beginners alike share photographs, swap advice and flag up urgent issues like pollution or vandalism. Nationally, projects like the RSPB’s Big Garden Birdwatch and Butterfly Conservation’s annual count show how mass participation can generate serious research data while fostering community pride.

Growing beyond Cuddington

Cllr Spickett believes other wards could easily copy the model:

“Every residents’ association or friends group could nominate a local enthusiast to pull together sightings. It doesn’t have to be ward-wide – start with your street or park. Like everything else in the borough it runs on those magic fairies called volunteers, but the rewards are huge. We hope to keep our list running year on year so we can see how weather patterns and human activity – both good and bad – affect what we see.”

Plans are already in place to create a 2026 sightings page for Cuddington. The longer-term aim is to build a record that not only captures the delight of local birdwatchers but also contributes to understanding how climate and land management shape Surrey’s wildlife over time.

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Sam Jones – Reporter Related reports: Grafton Stables to Remain Green Space

Redhill care home put under special measures

10 October 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emily Dalton LDRS

Adult social care stock image. Credit Eduardo Barrios on Unsplash

Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

10 October 2025

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Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is pleased to confirm that Places Leisure will take over the operation of the Rainbow Leisure Centre in Epsom from 1 October. This follows the Council's announcement in July appointing Places Leisure as the new operator on a 10-year contract, with the option to extend for a further five years.

This marks an exciting new chapter for the Rainbow Leisure Centre with members set to continue benefitting from high-quality leisure, health and wellbeing services.

Places Leisure, part of the PfP Group the UK's leading social enterprise, will be investing its own capital into the leisure centre, upgrading the gym, studios, swimming changing rooms and more.

From 1 October, existing members or anybody looking for a new membership should contact enquiries@pfpleisure.org. More information can be found on their website – Rainbow Leisure Centre | Places Leisure. Places Leisure has been working closely with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the outgoing operator, GLL. to ensure an efficient and safe handover.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) , Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee said:

"The wellbeing of our community is at the heart of everything we do, and our Health and Wellbeing Strategy continues to shape how we support residents to live healthier, happier lives. We're proud to be entering a new era at the Rainbow Leisure Centre, one that embraces a holistic approach to health and fitness, and delivers an inclusive Active Communities programme, alongside activities delivered both at the centre and outside in the wider community.

"Places Leisure is providing a platform where everyone in our borough can thrive – opening up opportunities for residents of all ages, including young people, the elderly and those living with a disability or illness, wherever they may be on their wellbeing journey.

"I'd like to thank Places Leisure and Greenwich Leisure Limited for working together to ensure a smooth transition for members. I'd also like to extend our gratitude to Greenwich Leisure Limited for the positive legacy they leave behind, which we are proud to build upon."

Dan Walker, Business Development Director at Places Leisure, said: "It is clear that the Rainbow Leisure Centre stands at the heart of the community, providing opportunities for local people of all ages and abilities to enjoy being active and to bring people together. We are delighted to be the new operators of the centre, and we thank GLL for the hard work they have put in during their time as operator. We look forward to a successful partnership with Epsom and Ewell Council, local stakeholders, and of course the colleagues who bring the centre to life.

"A thriving community is a community where everyone is welcome in a truly inclusive way, which is why within the first year of our contract we will invest c£4.7million in a series of projects including a new fitness suite, studios and changing facilities to support community engagement. Our commitment will further boost community activities, inspire people of all ages to lead an active and healthy lifestyle, whilst generating over £5million of social value each year."

Places Leisure website – **https://www.placesleisure.org/**

Places Leisure will also offer a wider range of health and wellbeing-related activities, delivered both inside and outside of the leisure centre, including:

- An Active Communities programme, including exercise referrals for falls prevention, cardiac rehab and weight management; community wellbeing walks, as well as programmes such as 'move through menopause' and Health MOTs, which will support local people in an inclusive way and enable the community to thrive.
- New leisure centre programmes targeted at under 16s and the elderly: including LES Mills exercises classes and Saturday Night Project activities for the under 16s and new EGYM and walking sports to help older adults be more physically active.
- Social value initiatives: such as work placement opportunities including for unemployed and disabled people; leisure industry careers advice and curriculum support; and supporting the local economy by keeping spending within the local supply chain.

Places Leisure will continue to invest in the environmental sustainability of the centre, this will be overseen by an environmental coordinator.

Places Leisure is a social enterprise which is passionate about 'creating active places and healthy people' and improving opportunities for communities to be physically active. It experiences over 30 million visits per annum across the 101 leisure facilities that it operates on behalf of local authorities across the country and supports over 126k children and adults learning to swim each year. **https://www.placesleisure.org/**

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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Gold star at the end of the Rainbow

Pot of gold for Rainbow?

Rehabilitation Hub in Leatherhead rehabilitated

10 October 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About Surrey Downs Health & Care Partnership

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

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

Guildford theatre stage for a community cultural hub

10 October 2025



Yvonne Arnaud Theatre marks 60th birthday with major transformation

On Wednesday 10 September, the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford hosted a 60th Birthday Concert celebrating both a milestone anniversary and the completion of a major regeneration project made possible by substantial funding from Your Fund Surrey.

Landmark investment from Surrey County Council

In June 2023, Surrey County Council approved more than £2 million from its Your Fund Surrey Large Community Project scheme for the theatre's 'Play Your Part' capital campaign. It is the largest single award ever made under the fund, designed to secure the Yvonne Arnaud's future as a cultural community hub with theatre at its heart.

A theatre transformed

Over the past two years, the theatre has delivered radical improvements including a new accessible lift, modernised toilets on every floor, flexible multi-purpose rooms for community groups, a reconfigured front of house and a more welcoming ground floor foyer.

During the anniversary concert, VIP guests including His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh toured the new spaces and enjoyed performances spanning six decades of productions, with contributions from the volunteer choir and Young Company.

Six decades at the heart of the community

Since opening in 1965, the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre has been central to Guildford's cultural life and an important driver of the local economy. Its outreach programmes and community initiatives already play a significant role across Surrey. The new facilities, supported by Your Fund Surrey, are intended to ensure the theatre can meet the needs of residents and visitors for the next half century.

Voices of support

Denise Turner-Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community, said the council was proud to back the project:

"We would like to congratulate the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre on the delivery of this flagship Your Fund Surrey project, thanks to over £2 million of Large Community Projects Funding, to develop Guildford's iconic and much-beloved building into a friendly, accessible community hub to serve the whole of Surrey.

"Your Fund Surrey is all about empowering our residents to Make It Happen, by significantly investing in projects that will make a real lasting impact for local communities.

"This long-anticipated renovation project at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre is a great example of how Your Fund Surrey investment has been used to create vibrant, resilient spaces where residents and community groups can come together for social and cultural enrichment, both now and in the future."

Theatre Director and Chief Executive Joanna Read added:

"We can't thank Surrey County Council's Your Fund Surrey enough for supporting our determination to make the theatre

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accessible and sustainable for the future. We are also hugely grateful to the many people who, early in our journey, wrote letters of support for our ambitions to refurbish the theatre, and those who donated to our campaign.

“We are delighted that our building is now able to welcome even more people to enjoy the fantastic benefits of theatre and arts participation.”

About Your Fund Surrey

Your Fund Surrey was launched in 2020 to back projects that deliver lasting benefits across the county. Since then, it has enabled communities to improve their local environment, build new spaces, enhance cultural venues and develop green areas, creating a stronger sense of pride and belonging.

By investing in diverse initiatives, the scheme is helping to build vibrant, resilient communities and demonstrates what can be achieved when residents come together to make it happen.

The Duke of Edinburgh addresses the audience, in front of the assembled concert company, before unveiling a commemorative plaque – credit: Craig Fuller

Sam Jones – Reporter



Bookham to get new community centre

10 October 2025



After six years of waiting and false starts, Bookham is finally getting a new community centre.

The old Bookham Youth Centre on Lower Road shut its doors in 2019 after falling into disrepair, leaving the area without a dedicated youth and community hub.

Members agreed to spend £2.8m of existing capital funds to knock down the old building and replace it at a Surrey cabinet meeting on September 24. Councillors said they hope the new multi-purpose building will be ready by March 2027.

Cllr Clare Curran, Conservative member for Bookham and Fetcham West said: “There is real excitement in Bookham that a new centre is going to be delivered.

“This is not just a youth facility […] The former centre was used by a huge range of community users from everything from the University of the Third Age to challenges with disabled children and an early years provider.”

The new centre is set to take the place of three lost facilities – the former youth centre, The Bridge in Leatherhead (closed after RAAC was found in the roof) and the Bookham Family Centre. Day-to-day running of the centre is expected to be handed to a third-party provider, meaning no additional ongoing costs to the council or future unitary authority.

“It has taken some time to get to this point,” said Cllr Clare Curran who represents Bookham. “We’ve had a few false dawns on the journey.”

In 2021, councillors promised a shiny new building on the Lower Road Reception Ground, at the cost of £2.5m, with homes alongside to help pay for it. But that plan was scrapped after tougher planning rules on the Green Belt and new biodiversity requirements meant the recreation ground scheme was no longer possible.

Instead, Surrey County Council has shifted its focus back to the old youth centre site. But housing that was meant to come alongside the scheme has been kicked into the long grass, with any decision on new homes delayed until after 2027.

Public consultation and planning approvals are still to come so residents still have an opportunity to have their say.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Bookham Community Centre on 164 Lower Road. (Credit: Google Street View)

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Surrey's "suffer the little children..." tested

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Plans to turn a family house into a home for vulnerable children on a Surrey street have been given the green light despite strong opposition from its future neighbours.

A five-bed detached home on Crosby Hill Drive in Camberley will be transformed into a children's home for up to three kids aged 10-17. Staff would live in with them around the clock, with no changes made to the building itself.

Council officers state the home is sorely needed, with rising demand for secure, regulated accommodation for children in care.

But of 28 locals who wrote in about the scheme, 27 objected. Concerns ranged from traffic and road safety to fears the change could alter the "character" of the street. But councillors said many of the concerns were based on myths and misunderstandings about children's homes.

Members of a Surrey County Council planning committee approved the scheme at a meeting on September 24.

One resident, however, wrote in support, arguing the location is exactly the kind of quiet and supportive environment vulnerable children should be given: "Everyone deserves a safe place to live," they said.

Despite traffic concerns, highway officers said there will not be a material change in the use of the road or car parking spaces down the street.

Rebecca Hanifan, responsible for looking after children's homes within Surrey, told the committee: "Children's homes are heavily regulated. The children who live in them are risk assessed and those with higher needs are placed in secure settings, not in the community.

"These are children who can live in a family setting- they go to school, they sleep well at night, and do normal activities over the weekend. Our homes blend into communities, property values do not drop and our children are well-behaved."

Cllr Ernest Mallett MBE dismissed the claims the children's home would damage the character of Crosby Hill Drive. He said: "How is that any different to children living in other houses? This is a perfectly viable use for the property. It won't be any trouble to anyone and won't be any different to any other house on the street.

"We are a first-class western society and we take care of people."

Others noted practical issues- like the lack of a bus shelter nearby and concerns about parking during staff changeovers – but backed the need for more children's homes, given the national shortage of foster carers.

The thorny issue of restrictive covenants on the property was raised by Nigel James, speaking on behalf of one of the neighbours, who said the council risked "wasting tax payers' money" if due diligence was not done. But officers and councillors stressed covenants were not a planning matter for the committee, and Cllr Mallett said they were "virtually unenforceable".

Cllr Jeremy Webster expressed unease about "parachuting" a children's home into a quiet residential area and cited apparent estate agent warnings of a 10 per cent dip in house values. Meanwhile, Cllr Trefor Hogg said he sympathised with residents' concerns but stressed: "We need both foster homes and children's homes in Surrey."

Emily Dalton LDRS

View outside 18 Crosby Hill Drive, in Camberley. (Credit: Surrey County Council documents)

Surrey Uni finds gay vets face discrimination

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A new study from the University of Surrey and the Royal Veterinary College has highlighted the ongoing presence of discrimination and its impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other (LGBT+) veterinary professionals and students in the UK.

The research, published in Vet Record, analysed 130 survey responses and found that over half (55.4%) of the participants had either experienced or witnessed some form of discrimination, ranging from microaggressions to outright threats of violence. This number highlights a concerning problem for LGBT+ veterinary professionals and students and a call to action for profession to collectively work to ensure everyone can work free from discriminatory behaviour.

The findings also reported that over half of the participants were not fully “out” to everyone at their workplace or place of study underlining that not all LGBT+ veterinary professionals and students feel safe or welcome to share who they are at work or study. However, in contrast, the positive findings from the study were that those who were “out” were more likely to report feeling supported at work and by the wider veterinary community.

Participants also cited a fear of negative repercussions on their career progression and educational attainment as a reason for not disclosing their identity. The study notes that such fear can lead to stress, anxiety and a sense of disconnection from colleagues.

Dr Charlotte S. McCarroll, Associate Head of School (Education) at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Surrey, said:

“For our LGBT+ family, friends and colleagues, discrimination remains a pressing issue within the UK veterinary profession. More needs to be done by our institutions for these individuals to feel supported, including increasing and promoting support networks, improving education and training on anti-discrimination laws, and firmly promoting equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.”

Dr Mat Hennessey, post-doctoral researcher in veterinary social science at the Royal Veterinary College, said:

“The findings of our study highlight the ongoing work which needs to occur, both in places of work and education, to foster inclusive environments which are supportive of all people. Creating such environments, where people can be their authentic selves without fear of discrimination, is a team effort requiring both institutional support for EDI initiatives and active engagement with the wider community.”

Peter Heather MRCVS, President of BVLGBT+ said:

“Within our profession there are many employers and colleagues who remain committed allies, but as this study shows, discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the veterinary profession persists. To combat this, leaders in our profession need to educate others and themselves about discriminatory behaviour and learn more about the benefits of open and inclusive work and study environments that allow people to just be themselves.”

Surrey University

Epsom and Ewell’s NESCOT plumbs the heights

10 October 2025



Nescot’s gas and plumbing apprenticeship provision has been awarded a City & Guilds End Point Assessment (EPA)

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plaque for excellence in apprenticeship delivery.

Elizabeth Akinlaja, City & Guilds Business Development Manager for London, Kent & Sussex, officially presented the award to Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis and the plumbing team at the college this week (Monday 22 September). She said: “Congratulations Nescot, it was a pleasure presenting the City & Guilds EPA Excellence plaque to the apprenticeship team. This award is for their dedication and commitment in supporting learners on their Building Services Engineering (BSE) apprenticeship provision, which has resulted in outstanding first-time pass rates, especially in plumbing, an area facing significant skills shortages. Well-done to everyone involved for making such a positive impact!”

Learners on the gas engineering apprenticeship, part of the plumbing apprenticeship department at Nescot achieved a 94% first time pass rate.

The award recognises excellence in Nescot’s EPA delivery, which is the final stage of an apprenticeship designed to validate an apprentice’s knowledge, skills, and behaviours against the required apprenticeship standard. It signifies the high quality and standard of the college’s apprenticeship training, and celebrates the plumbing apprenticeship department’s successful and impactful EPA achievements.

Liz Crawley, Head of School, Construction, Engineering & Automotive at Nescot, commented: “It’s fantastic to receive such amazing feedback from City & Guilds. Our plumbing team work really hard to ensure the best possible outcomes for our apprentices and local employers.”

Sarah Keith, Head of Apprenticeships at Nescot, added: “I am so proud of the teamwork at Nescot across all apprenticeships. This award is a testament to the benefits of working in a strong team that supports our apprentices, employers and each other. It means that our students are fully qualified and industry ready. Well-done to the plumbing team, and everyone involved in apprenticeships at Nescot.”

The EPA Excellence award showcases Nescot’s commitment to apprentice success and industry standards and reflects the wide range of apprenticeship training available at the college. At Nescot, we offer apprenticeships in carpentry and joinery, commercial catering, gas engineering, plumbing and heating, electrical installation, business administration, customer service, team leading and management, marketing executive, hairdressing, early years, health play specialists as well as laboratory scientists.

Explore the range of apprenticeship courses available on the Nescot website.

Photo: (centre left to right): Nescot Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis receiving the City & Guilds EPA Award plaque from Elizabeth Akinlaja, City & Guilds Business Development Manager for London, Kent & Sussex along with the Nescot Plumbing team. Credit NESCOT

An EPA Plaque from City & Guilds is an award given to colleges and training providers to recognise their high-quality apprenticeship delivery and the success of their apprentices. The plaque highlights consistent excellence in End-Point Assessment (EPA) performance, based on factors like high pass rates and a large number of Distinction grades achieved by apprentices. It is also a recognition of staff dedication, guidance and support offered to learners.

NESCOT

Epsom & Ewell’s French racing twin is a favourite

10 October 2025



The Château de Chantilly has been selected as Monument Préféré des Français 2025 (France’s Favourite Monument), surpassing 13 other iconic sites in a national vote. It succeeds the 24 Hours of Le Mans circuit, which won the honour in 2024.

This accolade was conferred through the popular France 3 television programme Le Monument Préféré des Français, presented by Stéphane Bern, which each year invites the public to vote for their favourite heritage site. Stéphane Bern is a well-known French journalist, television and radio presenter, writer and historian. He specialises in European history, royalty and cultural heritage, and is often described in France as the country’s “Mr Heritage.”

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A heightened spotlight on Chantilly

Epsom and Ewell with Chantilly enjoy a twinning charter and both share a proud equestrian heritage. Chantilly is renowned for its racecourse and celebrated training grounds, Epsom is world-famous for the Derby, a race that has shaped the international thoroughbred calendar for over two centuries. This shared identity as centres of horseracing tradition provides a natural bond between the two towns and further enriches their twinning relationship.

The chateau victory not only amplifies the national and international profile of Chantilly but reinforces its status as an exceptional cultural treasure. The château, owned by the Institut de France, houses the Musée Condé, with the Duke of Aumale's art collection and library as its heart. It is also celebrated for its formal gardens, its expansive park and the remarkable Museum of the Horse, housed in the former great stables.

Since the château was designated "Monument préféré des Français," Stéphane Bern presented a commemorative plaque to Anne Miller, the château's administratrice générale. The French Ministry of Culture highlighted that this distinction honours not just architectural splendour, but the unique legacy bequeathed by the Duke of Aumale, reaffirming the château's role as a living site of art, memory and natural heritage.

The Duc d'Aumale: A link across the Channel

A key figure tying Chantilly to our locality is Henri, Duc d'Aumale (1822–1897), a French prince, military officer, scholar, bibliophile and art collector.

After the Revolution of 1848 forced the Orléans family into exile, the Duke of Aumale settled in Twickenham, just across the Thames from Epsom, in a notable residence known as Orleans House.

Although the main house was largely demolished in 1926, the Octagon Room and service wing survive as part of the Orleans House Gallery, now a Grade I listed building. During his stay, the Duke built an imposing library and picture gallery adjacent to Orleans House, housing many of his collections. These collections — including masterpieces by Raphael, Rubens and others — were later transferred back to Chantilly upon his death, forming a substantial part of the Musée Condé's holdings under his no-loans rule.

The Duke also had local ties through the birth of his son, François d'Orléans, duc de Guise, born in Twickenham in 1854. Upon his death in 1897, the Duke bequeathed Chantilly, together with its art, library and collections, to the Institut de France, under the condition that it be preserved as a museum of French art and history.

Twinning, cultural bridges, and local opportunity

The success of Chantilly in this national competition is a proud moment for Epsom & Ewell, reinforcing the value and impact of town-twinning. Twinning is not merely ceremonial — it offers opportunities for cultural exchange, reciprocal visits, shared projects in art, education and heritage, and deeper understanding between communities.

Nigel Collin, Chairman of the Epsom & Ewell Town-Twinning Association, commented:

"We warmly congratulate our colleagues in Chantilly for this well-deserved achievement. Anyone who has visited the Château cannot fail to be amazed, not just by its external splendour, but by the staggering depth of works from the 15th to the 19th century — works you can only see in situ here, thanks to the Duke of Aumale's strict no-loans condition. It really is well worth a visit, and if any residents are interested in visiting via a Twinning Association group, we will be pleased to advise and assist."

This announcement may inspire renewed interest in twinning visits, themed excursions focusing on heritage, art or gardens, school exchanges, and collaborative cultural programmes. Epsom & Ewell welcomes ideas for reciprocal exchanges with Chantilly, whether joint exhibitions, lectures, or youth projects.

For further information or to register your interest in a Chantilly visit, please contact the Epsom & Ewell Twinning Association via contact@epsomtwinning.com.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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