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

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Thousands of Young Muslims Gather in Surrey to Raise the Union Flag

24 September 2025



While London headlines were recently dominated by a divisive political rally, a very different gathering of young British Muslims took place quietly in the Surrey countryside.

From 19–21 September 2025, nearly 8,000 members of the **Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association UK (AMYA)** came together in Puttenham, near Guildford, for their annual **National Ijtema** — a three-day programme dedicated to faith, education, and service to the community.

The Ahmadiyya community, which has its largest UK mosque in **Morden** (the Baitul Futuh Mosque, one of the biggest in Western Europe) and another at **Southfields, Wimbledon**, is well established across South London and Surrey including Epsom. Locally, members are often seen involved in charitable activities such as foodbank support, litter-picking drives, and tree-planting schemes.

At the Surrey event, participants took part in academic and sporting competitions, discussions on civic responsibility, and practical workshops designed to encourage young Muslims to be active citizens. The highlight came when the Union Jack was raised and thousands pledged loyalty to the UK, echoing the teaching within Islam that “loyalty to one’s nation is part of one’s faith.”

His Holiness **Mirza Masroor Ahmad**, worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, addressed the gathering via live broadcast. He urged the youth to reform themselves, to uphold honesty and respect, and to serve both God and humanity.

Abdul Quddus Arif, President of AMYA UK, said:

“The National Ijtema is a powerful demonstration of how faith and civic duty can go hand in hand. Our young people show their love for Britain not through empty gestures but through practical service – from food drives and blood donation to supporting the most vulnerable in society.”

For decades the AMYA has raised millions for British charities, donated tonnes of food to foodbanks, and clocked up tens of thousands of volunteer hours. The Puttenham gathering was intended not just as an internal conference but as a visible statement of what patriotism can look like when it is rooted in service rather than division.

As one local attendee remarked, “We’re proud to be British, proud to be Muslim, and proud to show that the two go hand in hand.”

The Ahmadiyya community has long been a part of Surrey’s wider social fabric, opening its mosques for interfaith dialogue and local visits, and regularly organising peace walks. Against a backdrop of national debate about protest and identity, this year’s Ijtema sent a simple message: thousands of young Muslims are committed to building bridges and serving their country with dignity.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Surrey County Council flags up the flag issue

From field to fight: Bramley camp faces enforcement questions

24 September 2025

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An unauthorised traveller camp has been built on land earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape – and now plans to make the site permanent have been submitted. Witnesses reported several caravans moving on to Unstead Lane in Bramley last week, sparking frustrations among residents over the lack of enforcement action. Since then a petition has been created calling on immediate action to be taken – with more than 600 people already signing.

It says: “Residents and taxpayers expect and deserve equal protection under planning law. The Surrey Hills National Landscape and Green Belt exist to safeguard our countryside for the benefit of all, not to be eroded by unlawful development. Allowing this encampment to remain would set a dangerous precedent that planning law can be ignored without consequence.”

Guildford Borough Council has said it was aware of the work carried out and understood people’s concerns. Officers visited the encampment and completed background work to gain a full understanding of the situation.

Councillor Jane Austin, leader of the Conservative opposition group in neighbouring Waverley Borough Council, represents the Bramley and Wonersh ward near the site. She said: “People went to bed on Friday looking out to a field and now they have this. Saturday the road was blocked and they were clearly doing something without planning permission, but nobody could get hold of anyone. That field was due to be national landscape land, deemed to be of that high quality. The land is on floodplain and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, they won’t ever be legally built. People around here are reasonable and agree the GTL (Gypsy Traveller League) community need somewhere to live. Everybody should follow the law of the land without exception, planning is there to build sustainable communities and must be followed.”

Councils must provide adequate land for housing – whether fixed homes or traveller pitches. If they cannot demonstrate enough provision, sustainable planning applications are difficult to reject as they are often won on appeal – with the council liable for costs. In 2024 Guildford Borough Council was only able to identify 2.59 years supply for traveller pitches, below the minimum five years. Elsewhere in Surrey, Runnymede Borough Council’s decades-long failure to provide the legal minimum number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches has forced families to take matters into their own hands and build their own. Runnymede’s planning committee recently felt obligated to approve 12 new pitches in Hardwick Lane, Chertsey, despite concerns the site would be overcrowded and the roads unsafe.

Guildford Borough Council said it could not be expected to predict or prevent this type of incident occurring, but would react and manage it as quickly as possible. A spokesperson said: “If a breach of planning control is confirmed on any site in the borough, we have several enforcement options including negotiation and formal action. However, the enforcement powers available to local authorities do not achieve an instant solution.”

A planning application for the site was submitted on Saturday September 13. If it contains the correct paperwork, the council must validate it – with nearby residents contacted and given the opportunity to submit their views before any decision is made.

Surrey County Councillor Matt Furniss said he has been speaking with Guildford’s planning team and that Surrey Highways Enforcement has also visited the site to assess the new unauthorised access onto the highway for safety and to determine next steps. He added: “It is always disappointing when some individuals choose to work outside the planning process and I will be pressing both councils for a quick resolution.”

MP Jeremy Hunt said: “Residents all express the same sentiment – why is there so little action to address unauthorised encampments like this, which are appearing with increasing frequency. It is absolutely infuriating to see the law being ignored this way – and the people who do it getting away scot-free. This latest case is another rural field, recognised as being of such quality that it is earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape. Yet local people now face the prospect of potentially years of planning enforcement action – with no guarantee of success. The point is that such drawn-out processes risk consuming vast amounts of council time and money, while the local community continues to suffer the consequences. Early intervention and decisive action such as prompt issuance of a Stop Notice would help prevent situations like this from worsening.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image of site in Unstead Lane, Bramley

Epsom residents to get “care closer to home”?

24 September 2025

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

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

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

Local impact

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

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

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

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

National background

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

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

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: Idealised neighbour hood health centre

Epsom and Ewell MP calls for SEND action

24 September 2025

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Helen Maguire MP for Epsom and Ewell renewed her call for immediate government action to address the crisis in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, following her attendance at both the *Fight for Ordinary SEND* rally on Parliament Square and the Westminster Hall debate on *Children with SEND: Assessments and Support*, held on 15 September 2025.

At the Parliament Square rally, Ms. Maguire met with parents and carers who shared deeply troubling accounts, including cases in which children appear to have been removed from the register for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), despite ongoing and substantial need. Families also raised concerns about long waiting lists, lack of specialist provision, and inconsistent support from local authorities.

A key piece of evidence cited by rally-attendees relates to new findings from the *Centre for Justice Innovation* (CJI). According to CJI's literature review and follow-up research:

- A very high proportion of children who are sentenced by criminal courts have identified SEND. For example, one statistic shows that **71%** of children sentenced between April 2019 and March 2020 had identified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- More broadly, children with SEND are significantly overrepresented throughout the youth justice system: amongst those cautioned or sentenced for offences (including serious violence), over **80%** have been recorded as ever having special educational needs; for prolific offenders it's even higher.
- Barriers to effective diversion have been consistently highlighted: children with communication or learning difficulties are less likely to be diverted out of the formal justice system because their needs are either unrecognised or misinterpreted as behavioural problems.
- The CJI reports that data on SEND in diversion programmes is patchy, with inconsistent recording, varying assessment tools, and a lack of standardisation, which obstructs accountability and improvement.

These findings underline how failures in early identification, assessment, and support not only impact children's education but may also increase risk of contact with the justice system.

Westminster Hall Debate & SEND Petition

The Westminster Hall debate *Children with SEND: Assessments and Support* took place, prompted by a petition titled *"Retain legal right to assessment and support in education for children with SEND"*, which attracted over 122,000 signatures. The petition calls on the Government to maintain existing legal protections (including the EHCP process) and improve the timeliness and quality of assessments.

MPs from across parties spoke powerfully about how delays in EHCP assessment, weak enforcement, and underfunding are leaving children and families without vital support. Some remarked on whether changes being mooted to the law may reduce legal guarantees for EHCPs—something campaigners have strongly opposed.

Case Example from Helen Maguire in Debate

During the debate, Helen Maguire shared a case from her own constituency:

"Four-year-old Maeve lives in my constituency and has cerebral palsy. She requires constant care, is unable to walk, has limited speech and has multiple ongoing medical conditions that require attention. Despite that, and despite the fact that her parents applied to Surrey County Council almost a year ago, the council has refused to even assess her for an EHCP. She started school last week, but still does not have an agreed plan in place."

This story underlines how delays and refusal to assess are not abstract problems—they are happening now and affecting young children with complex needs.

What Must Be Done

Helen Maguire is calling on the Government to take the following measures urgently:

1. **Restore and protect the legal rights associated with EHCPs**, ensuring that children who need assessments receive them promptly, and that the process is enforced.
2. **Increase funding** to SEND services and local authorities, especially for specialist care, speech and language

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therapy, and other supports that are in short supply.

3. **Shorten waiting lists** and reduce the backlog of assessments, so that children are not forced to begin school (or continue schooling) without the plan and support they are legally entitled to.
4. **Ensure better data and transparency**, particularly in diversion and youth justice settings, so the over-representation of SEND children is properly understood and addressed.
5. **Improve training** among professionals in education, local government and justice system sectors so that SEND is identified and accommodated, not misinterpreted as misconduct or behavioural issues.

Helen Maguire MP said: “We are seeing families shattered by delays, by refusals to assess, by thousands of children starting school without the support they clearly need. The statistics show that without early intervention, children with SEND risk falling into a system that is not equipped for them. The Government must act now—not in months, but immediately—on funding, waiting lists, and legal rights. Our children deserve nothing less.”

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

£4.9 million not enough to solve Surrey’s SEND problems?

Surrey sent on a U-turn on SEND by MPs?

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

24 September 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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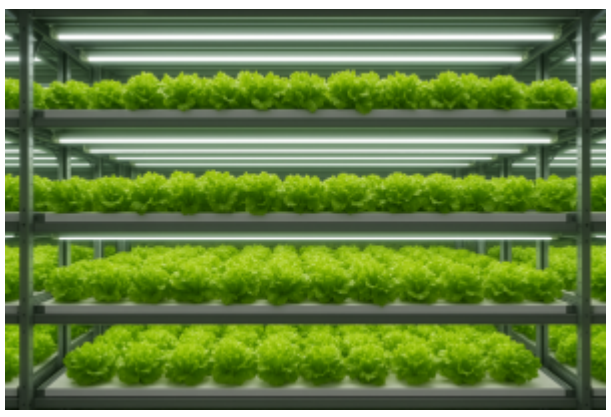
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Surrey Uni studies the climate friendly way to grow our lettuces

24 September 2025



Vertical farming has been hailed as a futuristic answer to Britain’s food security challenges – but a new study led by the University of Surrey suggests the picture is more complicated.

The research, published in *Food and Energy Security*, found that while vertical farms can deliver extraordinary crop yields and use far less water than traditional fields, their carbon footprint still exceeds that of soil-based farming.

What is vertical farming?

Unlike conventional agriculture, vertical farms grow crops indoors, often in stacked trays under carefully controlled light, temperature and humidity. Plants are usually grown without soil, using hydroponic or aeroponic systems that deliver nutrients directly to their roots. This means vertical farms can operate in cities, warehouses, or disused buildings – and, crucially, they are not dependent on weather or seasons.

Proponents argue that this approach could free up farmland for nature, cut transport emissions by producing food closer to consumers, and help guarantee supplies as climate change disrupts traditional growing regions.

The Surrey-led study

The University of Surrey team compared lettuce grown in a commercial UK vertical farm with lettuce from two UK field farms – one on mineral soil and one on peat – and with Spanish farms, which supply around 95% of Britain’s winter lettuce.

They found that vertical farms can produce more than 20 times the yield of field farms: around 97 kilograms of lettuce per square metre, compared with just 3.3 kilograms outdoors. Water use is also dramatically lower, at 0.9 m^3/kg compared with up to 7.3 m^3/kg in Spain.

But the greenhouse gas emissions are still higher. Even when powered by renewable energy, vertically farmed lettuce produced about 0.93 kg of greenhouse gases per kilogram, compared with 0.57 kg from UK field farms.

Energy and materials the key hurdles

Much of the carbon burden comes from the heavy energy demands of lighting and climate control, as well as the jute fibre plugs used to support plant roots. Researchers estimate that swapping these for alternatives such as coconut coir could cut the land footprint of vertical farms by more than 95%.

Michael Gargaro, Postgraduate Researcher at Surrey’s Centre for Environment and Sustainability and lead author of the study, said:

“Vertical farming has the potential to transform food security in the UK, particularly as climate change and seasonal drought place growing pressure on traditional agriculture. Our research shows that while the technology can bring far higher yields and reduce water use, it currently comes with a higher carbon cost. The challenge now is to make vertical farming more energy-efficient and better integrated with renewable systems, so that it can become a truly sustainable solution.”

Dr Zoe M Harris, Director of the Centre and Co-Director of the Institute for Sustainability, added:

“With around 95 per cent of lettuce imported from Spain during the winter months, advances in vertical farming make it possible to secure a year-round supply of fresh produce while freeing up land for restoration. But to viably compete with field farming, vertical farms must cut their energy use and rethink the materials they rely on.”

Can vertical farms really feed the UK?

The study concludes that vertical farms are not yet the most sustainable option for lettuce. But with further innovation – particularly in energy efficiency and material use – they could become an essential part of Britain’s food system. For now, they remain a promising supplement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional farming.

The research was funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

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Big improvements required of Epsom care home

24 September 2025



An Epsom care home has been told it needs to make big improvements after inspectors found residents were being left to lead “very isolated lives.”

Fir Trees House, a residential home in Epsom for up to seven adults with learning disabilities, was inspected between October 2024 and July this year following concerns about the quality of care and facilities. At the time of the assessment, only four people were living there – most with long-term mental health conditions and several being assessed for autism.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) said the home was “not always safe” and “not well-led,” warning that some residents were at risk of harm. Inspectors branded the care homes as ‘requiring improvement’ in key areas.

Inspectors said the service “wasn’t always meeting” standards set out under national guidance on supporting people with learning disabilities and autism. In particular, they found staff often focused on tasks rather than encouraging residents to live more fulfilled, independent lives.

One resident told inspectors they were happy at the home, but others described their care as “unsympathetic” and even disrespectful. One person told inspectors: “They went on to recall their first day at the service, saying, “Staff laughed at me as I tried to get up the stairs, I felt very unwell. I had to rest on the stairs, I thought I was going to lose consciousness, my head was spinning and they were laughing.”

The CQC also criticised the service for failing to learn from mistakes. In one case, a resident was moved out after a court ruled they weren’t getting the support they needed. But no managers investigated what went wrong.

The report highlighted a lack of staff at night, meaning people’s safety could not be guaranteed in an emergency. Staff also admitted they weren’t sure which outside organisations they should contact if they had safeguarding concerns.

On top of that, the report said residents were not being encouraged to eat meals together, socialise, or take part in the local community – leaving them at risk of isolation.

However, inspectors did note some positives. Medication was managed safely, refurbishment work had started – including installing a stair lift – and staff spoke positively about the management team.

Inspectors said the home itself needed work. Kitchens and bathrooms were not always clean, and some areas were in poor condition. Since then, refurbishments have begun, with new flooring, a wet room and plans for a stair lift to help people with mobility needs.

The Care Quality Commission said Fir Trees House remained in breach of legal rules around person-centred care and governance.

Fir Trees House has been approached for comment.

283 Fir Tree Road, Epsom, Surrey. (Credit: Google Street View)

Surrey County Council flags up the flag issue

24 September 2025



Surrey County Council has set the record straight about whether residents can hang flags from lampposts.

In a statement shared with councillors and online, the authority said: “We recognise the importance of the Union flag and flag of St George as symbols of national pride, and we proudly fly the Union flag from our council headquarters in Reigate.”

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But the county council reminded people that anything fixed to a lamppost or painted on roads needs official permission first.

Without it, the council warns, flags and other attachments can pose safety risks for drivers and pedestrians. Unauthorised flags or paint markings will be removed during routine inspections.

Waverley Borough Council leader and Godalming county councillor Paul Follows, who shared the council's advice online, said residents should also be mindful about putting flags on property they don't own. "Please don't be surprised if it's taken down or reported by the owner," he said.

He added that removing graffiti or markings from public spaces costs money that ultimately comes out of taxpayers' pockets. "You can of course always fly a flag from your own property if you want to," he said.

Anyone keen to display a flag on public land is encouraged to apply for permission first. Details of how to do so are available on the Surrey County Council website.

Emily Dalton

Image: Union Jack flags on Ruxley Lane lampposts

The young of Epsom and Ewell can be legends

24 September 2025



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce its new local initiative – Epsom & Ewell Young Legends – an exciting programme of sports and creative activities taking place from 11 October to 24 November 2025. Designed for children aged 9 to 11, this free programme is open to children who live within the borough. Places can be booked on the council's website and spaces are limited.

The Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme aims to help children boost their confidence, develop new skills, make friends, and ease the transition for those preparing for secondary school.

A diverse range of activities such as Arts & Crafts – with dedicated sessions for children with special needs, Basketball, Girls Rugby, Judo, Musical Theatre (song and dance), Rap Therapy, and Yoga & Meditation. Delivered by trusted and skilled professionals in a safe and supportive environment, the programme encourages children to try new things and have fun.

The Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme forms part of the council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and follows on from the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games.

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, commented:

"We're proud to launch our first-ever Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme – a key step in delivering our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. By offering free access to sports and creative activities for 9 to 11-year-olds, we aim to inspire, build confidence and support them as they take their next steps – including the transition to secondary school.

"Bringing the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme in-house has allowed us to tailor it to the needs of local children and align it with our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We've made a conscious effort to reach those facing barriers to participation, including children supported through the government-funded Holiday Activities and Food programme.

"A huge thanks to the coaches and practitioners from Body & Brain Epsom, Cagers Basketball Club, Creative Minds, Laines Theatre Arts, Rap Therapy, Sutton and Epsom Rugby Club and Westcroft Judo Nork, for their support in delivering the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends.

"Whether a child is sporty, creative, or simply curious, Young Legends is about helping children to feel confident in trying new activities, and we warmly invite parents to encourage their children to take advantage of this exciting opportunity."

Programme timetable & sign-up information

Up to two activities can be selected per child and places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. More information including the timetable and sign-up information can be found here – Epsom & Ewell Young Legends | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. Forms can also be completed at Epsom Town Hall during opening hours.

For any questions, email the council's Community Development team: cdevelopment@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

About Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme 2025

More information is here – More information about the Epsom & Ewell Young Legends programme: Epsom & Ewell Young Legends | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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Activity	Session Date & Time	Venue
Arts & Crafts	10:30am – 12:00pmSaturdays, 11 & 18 Oct, 1 & 8 Nov	Epsom Library
Arts & Crafts (for children with SEN)	2:00pm – 3:30pmSaturdays, 11 + 18 Oct, 1 + 8 Nov	Epsom Library
Basketball	9:00am – 10:00amEvery Sunday, from 12 Oct to 16 Nov	Epsom & Ewell High School
Girls Rugby	6:30pm – 7:30pmEvery Wednesday, from 15 Oct to 19 Nov	Sutton & Epsom Rugby Club
Judo	6:00pm – 7:00pmEvery Tuesday, from 14 Oct to 18 Nov	Rainbow Leisure Centre
Musical Theatre(Song & Dance)	4:30pm-6:00pmEvery Monday, from 3 to 24 November	Laine Theatre Arts
Rap Therapy	4:00pm – 5:00pmEvery Thursday, from 16 Oct to 6 Nov	Epsom Library
Yoga & Meditation	3:30pm – 4:30pmEvery Friday, from 17 Oct to 21 Nov	Body & Brain Epsom

About the EEBC Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2028

The strategy is designed to support all residents, with particular attention given to children and young people, older adults, individuals whose health is affected by broader social and economic factors and those whose personal circumstances may disproportionately increase their vulnerability to poor health and wellbeing. The strategy also includes specific references to those who are disproportionately impacted by isolation, disability, digital exclusion and people with long-term health conditions. (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Community and Wellbeing Committee, 08/07/2025 19:30

About Body & Brain, Epsom

Body & Brain Epsom Centre offers classes in deep physical, emotional and spiritual healing through meditative movement, deep stretching and shaking exercises. The practice originates from Korea where it has a rich 5,000 year old history of holistic healing and mind-body practices. Devoted to helping individuals better manage and utilize their brains, this beautiful discipline is suitable for people of all ages and levels, and it is the perfect way to increase your physical activity and gain a greater sense of peace. Body & Brain | EPSOM | Class Schedule

About Cagers Basketball Club

Cagers Basketball Club is committed to fostering a love for the game and providing competitive basketball for players of all ages and abilities. Their core values include hard work, respect, discipline, and enjoyment. Through teaching correct fundamentals and improving basketball knowledge and skills, we prepare players for the next level, emphasising individual success within a team-oriented framework. Epsom and Ewell Families » Cagers Basketball Club

About Creative Minds

Founded in November 2012, Creative Minds has been delivering accessible and empowering art sessions for over a decade, earning a reputation as a highly trusted and respected service provider across the UK. Their Creative Minds (CM) Artists bring creativity, expression, and human connection to every session they deliver. We work with a wide variety of venues, including care homes, schools, learning disability services, day centres, and many more, ensuring art is accessible to people of all ages and abilities. About Us – Creative Minds – Accessible Art Sessions For Everyone!

About Laines Theatre Arts

Since its inception in 1962, Laine Theatre Arts has been dedicated to the fostering of creative talent. Among their alumni are some of the most highly regarded performers, teachers, choreographers, and director-choreographers in the world. The College’s outstanding reputation in the performing arts has been built on its unique identity as a training provider, exceptional employment records, and the company values instilled in its students which are noted, time and again by employers. Those familiar with Laine Theatre Arts agree unanimously that it is a unique environment. Who we are – Laine Theatre Arts

About Rap Therapy

Their focus is to complement the UK education sector by improving the mental health and creativity of students using rap. They equip students with transferable skills that provide benefits inside and outside of the classroom through unique rap based activities, mentorship and practical applications. Rap Therapy

About Sutton and Epsom Rugby Club

Founded in 1881, Sutton & Epsom is one of the oldest active Rugby Clubs in England with a proud and magnificent history. We first played against Saracens as far back as 1883/84, as one of their very early opponents, and in 1901 beat Stade Francais on their home turf.

Today the Club is one of the largest amateur Rugby Clubs in the Country and from its main ground in Rugby Lane, Cheam, remains run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. They have over 30 teams with 1,200 current and former playing members, plus 1,800 social members. suttonrugby.co.uk

About Westcroft Judo Nork

Their martial arts store offers an extensive selection of high-quality gear and apparel for practitioners of all levels. With products sourced from reputable brands, they ensure that both beginners and seasoned martial artists find the equipment they need to excel in their training. Westcroft Judo Nork

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New Centre at Nescot gives vision impaired students “the best of both worlds”

24 September 2025



A new Centre of Excellence for vision impaired young people has opened at the North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) in Ewell.

The initiative is run by the Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC), which has until now only operated its post-16 education hub at Dorton College in Orpington, Bromley. The Surrey launch marks the charity’s first step in expanding its unique “hybrid” model of education beyond London.

A hybrid model of learning

The RSBC approach combines mainstream college life with specialist support tailored to blind and partially sighted students aged 16 to 25. Lessons at Nescot are shared with RSBC staff in advance, allowing them to adapt materials into Braille, large print, coloured text or raised diagrams.

Students also take specialist sessions in Braille, mobility and assistive technology, supported by dedicated Learning Support Assistants. The aim is not only academic success, but building the confidence and independence to prepare for adult life.

Under the model, learners divide their time between their local college and the RSBC hub. It is a system that has delivered strong results in Orpington, where 98% of students achieve good educational outcomes despite half having previously experienced unsuccessful placements elsewhere.

Partnership with Nescot and Surrey County Council

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and Chief Executive of Nescot, said:
“We are delighted to partner with RSBC to host the new Centre of Excellence. Our college community is enriched by its diversity, and we believe all young people should be able to access quality education and support. This partnership is a fantastic step forward.”

RSBC Education Director and Executive Principal Josie Grainger-Francova added:
“Young people with vision impairment are so often excluded from the full education experience. Combining RSBC’s specialist expertise with Nescot’s broad curriculum and inclusive environment, we’re creating a blueprint for what high-quality, person-centred provision should look like. We’re proud to be expanding and supporting even more young people to thrive.”

From Surrey County Council, Eamonn Gilbert, Assistant Director for SEND Commissioning, said:
“The new Centre of Excellence marks a significant step forward in how we support learners with visual impairments in Surrey. RSBC’s proven track record, combined with Nescot’s welcoming and ambitious culture, creates an exciting new post-16 offer for young people with visual impairments.”

A student view

For learners like 19-year-old Lee Roake, the new centre is already making a difference. He said:
“It’s so much more convenient for me to travel to Nescot – previously, I had to commute four hours a day to college. It’s a really inclusive space and I’m supported to be as independent as possible. It’s nice to meet people who are similar to me, too. For me, it’s the best of both worlds.”

About the organisations

The Royal Society for Blind Children is the only specialist post-16 education provider for vision impaired young people in London and the South East. More details: www.rsbc.org.uk

Nescot, based in Ewell, provides a wide range of further and higher education courses from vocational training to degree-level programmes. More details: www.nescot.ac.uk

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Godstone’s gasworks fury while sinkhole not fixed

24 September 2025



Godstone residents are up in arms over suddenly announced gasworks on a ‘major cut through’’, warning the closures could turn traffic into a nightmare and hit local businesses – all while the High Street’s massive sinkhole still has not been fixed.

The works, due to be carried out by SGN, are set to start on September 29 and could last around 23 weeks. Water Lane has already been closed since September 1 for similar work.

But people say the timing is crazy. Charlie Mayall, who lives on Tilburstow Hill Road, called the plan “bonkers”. “I’m absolutely furious. I’m spitting feathers,” He said. “It’s adding insult to injury.”

“The diversion is going to be at least twice as bad,” he said. “Some of the side lanes aren’t wide enough for two cars, let alone a lorry.”

Things are made worse by claims from councillors that Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council didn’t know about the works — though SGN insists the project has been in the pipeline for some time and agreed with the authorities.

But residents remain unconvinced, claiming the council should have just told SGN to wait. People aren’t stupid. We understand the gasworks need to be done but they clearly don’t need to be done when the high street is also closed.”

Carol Ward, who lives on the high street, said people feel ignored. She said: “It’s ridiculous — no consultation, no signs, and no proper accountability. People feel walked over,” she said.

She added that local businesses are already struggling, including the Fox & Hounds pub, which has been around since 1603.

“I feel like I’m living on a building site,” Carol said, explaining the village has already put up with a road collapse in the high street. “I think most people have been very very patient …but there’s a limit to the what people will put up with,”

A Surrey Highways spokesperson said: “We are sympathetic to the concerns of residents… Our Highways Officers are meeting with SGN on September 3 to fully understand the need for their works in Tilburstow Hill Road, their duration and timing. At this stage, only a ‘provisional advanced authority’ has been approved and an official permit has not been granted.”

SGN defended the work, a spokesperson said: “It’s essential we replace these 100-year-old mains to keep gas flowing safely. Delaying the work increases the risk of unexpected interruptions… We’re reviewing with Surrey County Council whether temporary traffic lights could be used instead of full closures.”

SGN says businesses will remain accessible and compensation is available for those affected. Bus services and refuse collections should continue, though residents are advised to check for updates.

Carol Ward on Godstone Green. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Related reports:

Godstone “Sink-hole” residents to return

Surrey sink-hole major incident

Surrey expansion of SEN places

24 September 2025



An ‘Outstanding’ Surrey school could open a new satellite site at another primary- around eight miles away.

Surrey County Council has revealed plans to expand a top-rated school for children with severe learning difficulties. Woodlands School, in Leatherhead, could have a second location at Cranmere Primary and Nursery school in Esher – a mere 25-30 minute drive away.

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The move would create up to 28 extra places for children with severe learning difficulties and autism, all of whom have an Education, Health Care and Plans (EHCPs).

Currently Woodlands only has room for 83 pupils – though it has been squeezing in an extra 16 thanks to temporary classrooms.

Meanwhile Cranmere Primary, which has been rated 'Good' by Ofsted, has been running under capacity for years because of falling birthrates, council documents state. The building can take 630 pupils, but numbers have dipped enough there's now space to share.

The part of the Cranmere site earmarked for the expansion will need adapting so it can properly meet the needs of Woodlands pupils, according to reports. The work is said to have been planned to take place over the summer holidays, ready for a gradual roll-out of places from October 2025.

Surrey County Council says the set-up makes sense both for families and the budget. Officers say having local specialist places means children do not have to travel far away to school.

By providing places within the state system, the council's education bill drops and saves money for the taxpayer. Should these pupils be required to attend an education provision in the independent sector, costs would equate to around £1.484m per year every year. This is compared to the average cost for state-maintained specialist places of £644k.

Staff at the new site will be employed directly by Woodlands School and numbers will grow slowly over time, depending on demand.

The council says the move is part of its wider ambition to increase high-quality specialist school places across Surrey as the number of children with EHCPs continues to rise- with a 10 per cent increase expected over the next five years.

The current stage of the consultation will close on Friday 5 September 2025

Outside Woodlands School, Leatherhead. (Credit: Google Street View)

Related reports:

£4.9 million not enough to solve Surrey's SEND problems?

SENDing Pupils to Epsom's Mainstream Schools?

Surrey sent on a U-turn on SEND by MPs?

Epsom's Parish Church Marks 200 Years

24 September 2025



This September, Epsom pauses to celebrate the 200th anniversary of its parish church, the Church of St Martin of Tours. For two centuries the building has stood at the centre of town life — a place of worship, history, and identity for Epsom and Ewell.

The anniversary weekend will feature a range of special events. On Sunday 14 September at 3pm, historian Peter Ross will deliver a talk entitled *Dining with James and Jane: Eating at Home with the Georgians*. Drawing on the vivid diaries of Norfolk clergyman James Woodforde (1758–1802), who recorded every meal he ate, and the letters and novels of Jane Austen, Ross will reveal the food, manners, and household rhythms of Georgian England. His illustrated lecture will include images of paintings, prints, cookery books, and everyday domestic objects, offering a glimpse into the lives of our Georgian forebears. The afternoon will conclude with tea, followed by a service of Choral Evensong.

A stone laid in 1825

On 19 May 1825, the Rev. Joseph Darby, vicar of Epsom, laid the first stone of a new parish church. The medieval church that had stood for centuries was by then both too small and in disrepair. A meeting in 1823 resolved — after some debate — to rebuild. The sturdy medieval tower at the north-west corner was spared, along with the ancient font and wall memorials, but the remainder was swept away.

The contractors, William Blofield of London, working to plans by architect Mr Hatchard of Pimlico, expanded the footprint of the building. Side aisles were widened and lengthened, the west front was advanced, and new staircases and galleries provided for greater capacity. The rebuilt church could now seat around 1,120 parishioners.

At the stone-laying ceremony, Rev. Darby was presented with a handsome silver trowel, inscribed to mark the moment. Sadly, the trowel has since been lost, but the act it commemorated continues to shape the heart of Epsom today.

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Victorian Epsom: railways and renewal

Within a generation, however, Epsom was changing again. The arrival of the railway in the 1840s transformed the town from a quiet settlement of around 3,300 people into a rapidly growing commuter hub. Two lines, one from London Bridge and another from Waterloo, brought new residents and prosperity. By the mid-nineteenth century, the population had more than doubled.

The parish church once again felt the strain. Inadequate for the growing congregation, its galleries deemed unsightly, and its facilities cramped, it became the subject of another ambitious rebuilding plan. The vicar at the time, Rev. Waldegrave Bainbridge-Bell, rallied support from influential local figures, including Lord Rosebery and Sir Thomas Bucknill MP.

There was even talk that Epsom Parish Church might become the cathedral of a proposed new Diocese of Guildford. With such aspirations in mind, the architects Nicholson and Corlette were commissioned to draw up a design of “cathedral proportions”.

The 1908 extension

In August 1907, the foundation stone for the grand new east end was laid. A year later, on St Martin’s Day (11 November 1908), the Bishop of Winchester consecrated the new extension. The project cost £13,000 — a significant sum at the time — and gave the church much of the form it has today.

Not all of the plans could be realised: financial pressures meant the most ambitious elements of the Nicholson and Corlette design were never completed. But the east end remains one of Surrey’s most impressive ecclesiastical interiors, a testimony both to the ambition of its builders and to Epsom’s growth in the early twentieth century.

What remains today

Today, three key layers of history meet in the building:

- The medieval tower, the oldest surviving structure in Epsom.
- The 1825 nave and west end, the fruit of the first great rebuilding.
- The 1908 east end, marking the town’s Edwardian expansion.

Together, they tell a story not only of the parish church but of the town itself: medieval market village, Georgian spa settlement, Victorian commuter suburb, and Edwardian provincial centre.

Looking to the future

While this year’s anniversary recalls the laying of the 1825 foundation stone, there are further milestones ahead. In just three years’ time, the church will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its great east end. That event, too, will provide an opportunity for reflection and celebration.

For now, parishioners and townsfolk alike are invited to join in the September festivities — to mark 200 years since the church we know today began to rise from the foundations of its medieval predecessor.

As one of Epsom’s most enduring landmarks, St Martin’s stands not only as a house of worship but also as a witness to the town’s history. Its tower and walls have looked down on 200 years of change. In celebrating this anniversary, the community also honours the generations who built, rebuilt, and preserved Epsom’s parish church at the heart of civic life.

Two new Epsom and Ewell virtual day trips unveiled

24 September 2025



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched two new inclusive tours, part of their *Virtual Day Trips* series, in partnership with Whistlestop Tours. These tours explore Epsom and Ewell, shining a spotlight on the history and cultural heritage of the borough.

The Virtual Day Trips can be watched online for free – from the comfort of home, a school classroom, or in shared community spaces. They include film and audio, with immersive resource packs and memory boxes also available to bring the tours to life.

The Epsom and Ewell Virtual Day Trips were funded by the Arts, Culture and Heritage UKSPF 2024/25 allocation. They sit alongside the *Nonsuch Formal Gardens* tour produced in 2024.

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This project is part of the council's strategy to widen access to local history, allowing people to engage in a way that is comfortable to them.

The tours last around 30 minutes. Highlights include:

- Architectural elements from Nonsuch Palace near the Assembly Rooms in Epsom town centre
- Meeting residents and hearing about their passions, from throwing pottery to playing the bandura, the national instrument of Ukraine
- A rare peek inside the Watch House on Ewell High Street
- Ghost stories from local residents
- A behind-the-scenes tour with the Epsom Beekeepers Association

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said:

"I have lived in the borough of Epsom & Ewell for many years, and I found these tours completely fascinating. I thoroughly recommend them, whether you are new to the borough, a long-time resident like me, or someone who is interested in the local area – they can be enjoyed by everyone.

These two new inclusive Virtual Day Trips show our commitment to increasing access to our borough's rich history and cultural heritage. They will help people really get to know our fantastic local area."

Virtual Day Trips

Explore here:
Epsom
Ewell

The first Virtual Day Trip produced was Nonsuch Park.

Digital tours are also available on Bloomberg Connects:

- Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve
- Nonsuch Park

The Virtual Day Trips have been developed by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in partnership with Whistlestop Arts, Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell Library, Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, Epsom Beekeepers Association, Parkinson's Choir, Walk & Talk 4 Men – Surrey, Epsom Pots, and local residents.

About Whistlestop Arts
Whistlestop Arts is run by two creatives:

- *Annalees Lim* – a freelance artist with extensive community arts experience, particularly in disability arts and accessible projects. She is also an illustrator and children's activity book author.
- *Luna Russell* – a maker and arts facilitator passionate about the positive impact of the arts. She has managed projects for Chichester Festival Theatre, Chichester Cathedral, Surrey Arts and Horsham District Council, as well as leading community arts programmes.

Whistlestop Arts Virtual Day Trips
Virtual Day Trips are presented by Annalees and Luna, who meet local people and share their stories. Each trip includes films, podcasts and craft activities.

Full-length films are designed for use in group settings such as care homes and day centres, with built-in pause points for activities. Resource packs are available to enhance the experience.

For more information, visit: Whistlestop Arts – Virtual Day Trips

Luna Russell and Annalees Lim beside Emily Davison statue in Epsom. Credit **Whistlestop Arts**

Surrey care home concerns

24 September 2025

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The death of a 76-year-old man, who was found on the floor with fractured ribs, has led to concerns over safety of the remaining residents at a Surrey care home. Staff at Eastcroft Nursing Home in Woodmansterne Lane, Banstead, were notified that Stephen Lawrence had fallen on December 21, 2022, after his alarm was triggered. He had sustained multiple rib fractures but despite his complaints about abdominal pain and discomfort, was not admitted to St Helier hospital until Christmas Day. That was his only recorded incident at the home despite hospital scans later revealing older fractures, including to the spine, ribs and sternum.

Despite treatment, his condition did not improve and Stephen died on January 5, 2023. An inquest into his death was opened on February 16, 2023. It resumed on June 9, 2025, and concluded on June 13, 2025 with the court commenting on the delay between his fall and admission to hospital. It found the nursing home, which the Care Quality Commission judged as requiring improvement in 2023, was unable to explain how he had sustained the numerous old fractures which had all remained undiagnosed until his admission to hospital. It also found there to be deficient records on Mr Lawrence's condition after his fall.

The court also expressed concerns that Eastcroft Nursing Home's manager provided conflicting accounts over attempts to seek medical attention for Mr Lawrence after his fall – and for suggesting his rib fractures were sustained after he had been transferred to hospital. Coroner Anna Crawford said: "Mr Lawrence sustained significant unexplained injuries whilst he was a resident at Eastcroft Nursing Home. Nursing Home records were deficient in their recording of key events following his unwitnessed fall on December 21 2022. There was a delay in seeking medical advice following the unwitnessed fall on December 21 2022. The Nursing Home manager provided conflicting evidence about efforts to obtain medical advice and did not accept that the acute fractures leading to Mr Lawrence's death occurred whilst he was at the nursing home. In view of all of the above, (I am) concerned that there is an ongoing risk to current residents."

Eastcroft Nursing Home, which declined to comment at this stage, are under duty to respond to the prevention of future deaths report within 56 days. The coroner said: "Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for such action. Otherwise you must explain why no action is proposed."

Eastcroft Nursing Home in Banstead (Google)

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