

Epsom based Toyota raises £1/2m for MND

28 March 2025



Toyota has raised more than £500,000 to support people living with and affected by motor neurone disease (MND). It has also extended its partnership with MND Association for a further two years, into 2027.

Toyota joined forces with MND Association in 2021. The charity was chosen by the company's staff in memory of a much-loved colleague, Rachel Rollason, who suffered from MND, a terminal neurological condition that affects up to 5,000 people in the UK at any one time.

Since then, colleagues from Toyota (GB), Toyota Financial Services, Toyota Insurance Services and KINTO UK, have pushed themselves to the limits in a variety of fund-raising activities including taking part in marathons, a cycling challenge from Portsmouth to Newcastle, a Tough Mudder and a 100km walk along the River Thames which raised more than £120,000 in just two days.

Tanya Curry, MND Association's Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted that Toyota has chosen to extend its partnership with us. We are so grateful for everything they have done to support our work over the past four years, whether that's by volunteering, training to take part in an event, or fundraising. Thanks to Toyota, we have been able to provide support grants for life-changing wheelchair adaptations, while pushing forward with ground-breaking research into potential new treatments for this terrible disease. Over the next two years, the strong partnership between our organisations will continue to grow and allow us to accelerate progress in the fight against MND."

Scott Thompson, Toyota (GB) President and Managing Director, said: "I'd like to thank our staff for their efforts in helping us reach our fundraising target of £500,000. We already have plans for further fundraising, for example next month four senior team members: Jason Milton, Rob McKendrick, Carla Henson and Dariusz Mikolajczak, will take part in the London Marathon."

For more information, or to donate, visit <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/campaign/toyota-london-marathon>

For more information about MND Association please visit www.mndassociation.org

Toyota GB

Image: From L to R: Charlotte Taylor, Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive, MND Association, Pete Collins, Senior Corporate Partnerships Development Executive, MND Association, Kish Laungani, Specialist Sustainability Programmes, Toyota GB, Isla Thomson, Assistant, CSR, Sustainability and ESG, Toyota GB and Rosemary Parkin, Assistant Press and PR, Toyota GB

Epsom Charity Celebrates Project Milestone with a BBC Radio Takeover

28 March 2025



The Sunnybank Trust is celebrating a major milestone – five years of **Sunny Sessions**, its inclusive radio show dedicated to amplifying the voices of the learning disability community.

Founded during the lockdown by CEO **Dorothy Watson** and Futures Manager **Claire Dawson**, the show began with the goal of keeping the community connected during a difficult and isolating time. *Sunny Sessions* aimed to provide comfort, connection, and positivity through buzzing music, exercise segments, and relevant news updates.

Dorothy Watson, CEO of The Sunnybank Trust, said:

"We are proud to be celebrating five years of Sunny Sessions. What started as a way to connect people has become a vibrant platform run by and for the learning disability community. Congratulations to Jon Andrews, our dedicated producer, and many thanks to Surrey Hills Community Radio for hosting our show."

To mark this milestone, The Sunnybank Trust is pleased to announce that the **BBC Breakfast Show** will host the anniversary celebration on **28 March 2025**, between **7 – 9 am** on **BBC Radio Surrey & Sussex**.

As part of the celebration, the show will feature an interview between **Emma Blackmore**, a Sunnybank reporter based in Bristol, and the consultants from **Understand Us**, a consultancy founded by The Sunnybank Trust in 2019.

Understand Us is a learning disability-led consultancy based in Epsom, offering services such as training, workshops, and audits to help businesses become more accessible to people with learning disabilities. For more information, visit understandus.co.uk.

During the interview, the consultants will share insights into their roles, discuss how businesses can benefit from Understand Us, and reflect on their favourite projects.

James Cannon, BBC Producer, said:

"We are incredibly proud of the journey Sunny Sessions has taken over the past five years. This anniversary and the feature on BBC Breakfast provide an opportunity to share the voices and stories of the individuals who have been part of the show's success. Our mission has always been to amplify these voices and promote inclusion, and we are excited to take this next step in reaching an even wider audience."

Today, *Sunny Sessions* is presented by **Jon Andrews**, who brings his passion and energy to the show as it continues to grow. The programme has expanded to cover a wide variety of topics, providing a platform for people to share their stories, engage in meaningful discussions, and raise awareness about issues that matter to them.

Jon Andrews said:

"I'm incredibly proud of what we have achieved with the radio show and excited to see where the next five years will take us."

The Sunnybank Trust

Photo: **Jon Andrews from The Sunnybank Trust**, and **James Fieldus, a Sunnybank Reporter**. Photo by The Sunnybank Trust.

Godstone “Sink-hole” residents to return

28 March 2025



After a long wait, good news may finally be coming to some who were forced to evacuate after a massive sinkhole opened up in a Surrey town. Families living on the impacted street in Godstone have been told they may be allowed to return home this weekend.

The huge hole appeared on Godstone High Street on February 17 and was quickly declared a major incident due to its seriousness and complexity. Now scaled down to a ‘significant incident’ investigations are still ongoing as to what the cause is and how to solve it.

“We have some really good news for residents,” said Lloyd Allen, Infrastructure Team Manager for Surrey County Council. “We’re expecting them to return this weekend.”

Wearing a hi-vis jacket and standing in front of part of the enormous hole, Mr Allen said families on Godstone high street can once again sleep in their own beds. He warned that the news is subject to a couple of issues the team is investigating and depends on them getting the all-clear that water quality is up to standard.

Five weeks after the high street was almost swallowed up by the sinkhole, highway officials still do not know what caused the major incident. “The plan for the future is to carry on doing what we are doing,” said Mr Allen with no clear indication of when the saga might end. The infrastructure manager said he and the team, as well as specially hired geo technical engineers are analysing the investigation results and seeing if there is a tunnel network.

In a new video released by the county council, the highways team gave a latest update on Godstone with some crucial insights. Surveys have revealed a lot of anomalies in the area which could be deep sewers, series of tunnels or even potentially soak away from properties. Further investigations are still needed to pin down exactly what they are, the team said.

Afterwards, the team will plot a series of bore holes on the site that they can carry out to look under the surface. If more tunnels or voids are found, they can put cameras down and do some more testing. “But that work might take several months longer,” Mr Allen said.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: “Highways Officers have used foam concrete to temporarily fill the hole to stabilise the area and to ensure it doesn’t get any bigger.”

“Specialist surveys are continuing in areas which were previously inaccessible, to determine the underlying cause of the collapse and how best to permanently repair the area so it doesn’t reoccur.”

“Due to the unprecedented nature of this incident, we expect the full-scale repair of the site to take several more months although we expect residents will be able to return to their homes whilst works are carried out, once it is safe to do so. We thank them for their ongoing patience as we deal with this complex incident.”

Related report:

[Surrey sink-hole major incident](#)

Image: Lloyd Allen, Infrastructure Team Manager for Surrey County Council, on Godstone high street. (Credit: Surrey County Council).

Banstead Dog licensing scheme deemed ‘foul’

28 March 2025



Professional dog walkers say they were told “if you don’t like what we’re doing, take your dog somewhere else” at a public meeting about a new licensing scheme being introduced for several Surrey beauty spots.

Dog walkers have claimed the land managers are using the new licensing project as a ‘pay or go away scheme’ which they say it is more expensive than neighbouring schemes and has been “appallingly” managed.

New rules could see professional dog walkers pay £360 to use a Surrey beauty spot, Banstead Common, from April 1. Banstead Common Conservators (BCC) said the main reason for setting up the scheme was to ensure the safety of everyone who uses the Commons and to control commercial business on the land.

“There’s disdain for the profession and that’s been made very clear,” said Emma, a self-employed dog walker. She previously spoke to Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) of the BCC staff being “heavy handed”. Now, Emma said the BCC are “bullying people into submission” with the new licensing rules.

Calling the land managers “prejudiced”, the professional dog walkers said the BCC have presented “no evidence” that they are a danger to the public or conservation compared to any other person who walks over the heath.

“They are refusing to supply the legal standing for the scheme,” said Emma, “I just don’t know what else to do.” Dog walkers have said they welcome the licensing scheme in principle but accused the BCC’s proposition as ‘unworkable’, more expensive than others and without engagement or input from dog walkers.

Rather than just a side-hustle, professional dog-walking is a job or business that people pay their mortgage with. Jen, a dog walker for nearly 10 years said: “The chairman and another committee member were dismissive and incredibly rude when concerned dog walkers asked legitimate questions about the licensing scheme at a January meeting.”

For months the professional dog walkers have complained they have been “left in the dark” and there has been “no dialogue” with the managers implementing a

scheme which could significantly change their working conditions. “Their attitude has spurred so much misery and alienation,” an anonymous local dog walker said.

The chairman of the BCC accused professional dog walkers of “lying” in their complaints and “being insulting” against the BCC at a public meeting earlier this year. Another member advised dog walkers if they were not willing to pay for the license they should “go back to where they came from”.

A BCC spokesperson said: “All of our engagement with any user of Banstead Commons is done with respect and in accordance with our statutory duties.” The BCC have said they have responded to all enquiries they have received “in a professional and timely manner” and have hosted three informal meetings about the licensing scheme with positive feedback.

The land managers have said they are using their powers under paragraph 18 of the Metropolitan Commons Banstead (Supplemental) Act 1893 act to restrict commercial activity. Despite repeated requests from LDRS and interested groups, the conservators chose not to specifically highlight which part of the act they are referring to.

The BCC said the scheme was a response to the increase in the number of dogs being walked commercially on the Commons in recent years and the pressure it puts on the land, wildlife and visitors. As land managers, the conservators said, they need to ensure businesses are insured and identifiable when they are operating on our sites.

Spanning 1,350 acres, the land – owned by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council – includes Banstead Heath, Banstead Downs, Park Downs and Burgh Heath. Although the BCC claim the £360 annual license fee offers a good deal for users at just less than £1 a day, professional dog walkers argue it is extortionate compared to other Surrey and London boroughs which are council-run.

Similar schemes are also being trialled elsewhere in Surrey. Nonsuch Park in Epsom, is running a pilot commercial dog licensing fee of £200 a year with a limit of six dogs walking at any one time. The licence will be managed by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council as well as the London Borough of Sutton Council. Charging £164.50 to use open spaces across the whole district, Tandridge District Council also runs a licensing scheme.

Although some dog walkers may call the response “overblown”, the BCC said it has clear legal responsibilities to “protect the integrity of Banstead Commons and visitor safety”. The group added it has also catered its response in line with a prevention of future deaths report for Natasha Johnston, a professional dog walker who tragically was mauled to death by eight dogs she was walking in Caterham in 2023.

“Unknown people shouldn’t approach unknown dogs,” said Jen. She said the part of the scheme she was most concerned about was BCC staff being able to walk up to her and the dogs and check collars which could put the dogs and herself at risk. “It goes completely against my GDPR policy,” Jen said.

As it stands, if a dog walker’s license is revoked there is no process of appeal and no refund. “They are judge, jury and executioner,” Jen said. She lamented that neither Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, the landowners, nor the Department for Environmental Food and Rural Affairs want to get involved and the BCC are “unaccountable”.

“What’s different between dog walkers and members of the public walking dogs?” the anonymous dog walker challenged, explaining everyone uses the land and has to pick up dog poo. Speaking to the LDRS, the dog walkers said they take out local community dogs that live in the area and provide a needed service.

A BCC spokesperson said: “Banstead Commons Conservators are looking forward to working together with licensed dog walkers operating on our Commons. We have set up clear reporting procedures with licensed businesses which as well as a direct staff member to report concerns, includes hosting an annual review meeting open to all licensed businesses and an invitation for two representatives to join our Banstead Commons Consultative Group.

“Banstead Commons are wonderful open spaces enjoyed by many residents and visitors from further afield. Under our Act commercial activity is controlled in order to protect the integrity of the Commons and the welfare of its users. With the increasing volume of professional dog walkers, including displacement from other areas that have already implemented restrictions, it has become necessary to take the responsible step of licensing this activity. This scheme will help regulate the numbers of dogs being walked commercially on our sites and ensure that companies are operating safely and treating Banstead Commons, its users and wildlife with respect and consideration.

“Unless there is an incident to manage, Banstead Commons Conservators will not be interfering with licensed dog walking companies when they are operating safely and adhering to the licence scheme [...] Banstead Commons Conservators are always compliant in their operations.”

Related reports:

A dog’s dinner of a licensing scheme?

Should Nonsuch Park go to the dogs?

Image: Four dogs in Banstead wood, ahead of the licensing scheme to be introduced. (Credit: Dog walker Emma)

Surrey leads lateral thinking about vertical farming

28 March 2025



Can vertical farming be the key to improving and safeguarding the United Kingdom’s food system? This is the central question behind a new research project led by the University that has been awarded £1.4 million by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The Vertical Farming to Improve UK Food System Resilience (VF-UKFSR) project will investigate how vertical farming can improve the country’s supply of nutritious leafy greens, essential for a healthy diet.

Vertical farming is a method of growing crops in stacked layers, often indoors, using controlled environments. Unlike traditional farming, it doesn’t rely on soil or natural sunlight. It uses soilless techniques and artificial lighting to create optimal conditions for plant growth. This allows crops to be grown year-round, regardless of weather conditions and makes more efficient use of space and resources.

Dr Zoe M Harris, project lead from the University of Surrey’s Centre for Environment and Sustainability, said:

“Our project is keen to explore how vertical farming can provide local, diverse, and culturally appropriate food, given its potential to grow a wide variety of crops. So far, there’s been little in-depth analysis of the risks to our country’s leafy greens supply nor a thorough examination of the benefits and trade-offs vertical farming could bring to the UK’s food system. Thanks to this grant from UKRI, we’re excited to change that and create a clear roadmap to unlock this potential on a larger scale.”

The research team will work closely with farmers, industry, government and the community to make sure that the outputs of the project focus on real-life and immediate benefits.

The core team is made up of whole-system, environmental and social scientists, UK Urban AgriTech (UKUAT) and five farm partners – Flex Farming, Innovation Agritech Group, Farm Urban, GrowPura, and LettUs Grow.

Dr Lada Timotijevic from the University of Surrey said:

“Our research is all about identifying and understanding the risks to our food system and seeing how vertical farming can help tackle these challenges. We want to create tools that make it easy to see the impact of expanding vertical farming on considerations including food supply, land use, and the environment, so we can

make smart decisions for the future.

“We’re also focused on understanding the public’s perceptions of vertical farming and the social conditions needed for vertical farming to succeed, as well as on working closely with farmers, industry, and policymakers to build a roadmap that supports its growth across the UK.”

The project’s leadership team consists of:

- University of Surrey: Dr Zoe M Harris, Dr Lada Timotijevic, Dr Lirong Liu, Dr James Suckling, Dr Damiete Emmanuel-Yusuf
- University of Aberdeen: Professor Astley Hastings
- University of Sussex: Dr Alexandra Penn
- UKUAT: Mark Horler

Image: Vertical farm. Credit ifarm.fi Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

The Hidden Link Between Metabolic Syndrome and Joint Pain

28 March 2025



Many people have heard of *metabolic syndrome* as a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes — but it’s now becoming clear that it also takes a serious toll on our bones, joints, and muscles.

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions, including obesity, high blood pressure, raised blood sugar, high triglycerides, and low levels of “good” cholesterol (HDL). Affecting nearly one in three adults in the UK, it’s driven largely by sedentary lifestyles and poor diet.

But beyond its impact on the heart, metabolic syndrome causes long-term inflammation in the body, which in turn affects musculoskeletal health in several key ways:

- **Joint Pain & Arthritis:** Chronic inflammation from visceral fat can damage cartilage and accelerate the development of osteoarthritis, particularly in the knees and hips.
- **Tendon Problems:** Conditions like Achilles tendinopathy and shoulder pain are more common in people with metabolic syndrome. High blood sugar can stiffen tendons, making them prone to injury.
- **Bone Health:** There’s a strong link between metabolic syndrome and reduced bone density. Inflammation and insulin resistance disrupt normal bone repair, increasing the risk of fractures and osteoporosis.

The condition also interferes with the body’s ability to heal and maintain tissues, meaning injuries can linger and become chronic.

The good news? Physiotherapy and regular exercise play a crucial role in managing the effects of metabolic syndrome on the musculoskeletal system. By improving mobility, reducing inflammation, and supporting healthy weight loss, targeted movement and rehab strategies can make a real difference.

So if you’re living with joint or tendon pain and also have risk factors for metabolic syndrome, it might be time to take a more holistic view — and seek advice from a physiotherapist or your GP.

The Role of Physiotherapy and Exercise

Despite its challenges, metabolic syndrome’s effects on musculoskeletal health can be mitigated through physiotherapy and exercise.

1. Exercise as an Anti-Inflammatory Intervention

Regular exercise reduces chronic inflammation by promoting anti-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-10 while lowering pro-inflammatory markers. A study in *Diabetes Care* (2014) showed that aerobic exercise significantly reduced CRP and TNF- α levels in individuals with metabolic syndrome.

Weight loss through exercise reduces visceral fat, a major source of pro-inflammatory cytokines, easing joint pain and improving musculoskeletal function.

2. Physiotherapy for Joint Pain and Tendinopathies

Physiotherapy plays a key role in managing musculoskeletal conditions related to metabolic syndrome. Personalized exercise programs focusing on strength, flexibility, and joint stability help manage OA and prevent further joint damage.

For tendinopathies, physiotherapists recommend strengthening exercises, which promote tendon healing and reduce pain. A *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (2017) study found that eccentric exercises significantly improved function and reduced pain in Achilles tendinitis, even in individuals with metabolic syndrome.

Additionally, physiotherapists provide guidance on body mechanics and joint protection strategies, reducing strain on joints and tendons during daily activities.

3. Bone Health and Resistance Training

Resistance training is essential for bone health in individuals with metabolic syndrome. Weight-bearing exercises, such as strength training and resistance bands, stimulate bone formation and help maintain density. A *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* (2018) study found that resistance training improved BMD in postmenopausal women with metabolic syndrome, reducing osteoporosis and fracture risk.

Balance and coordination exercises can also be incorporated to prevent falls, particularly for individuals with weakened bones.

Conclusion: Addressing Metabolic Syndrome for Better Musculoskeletal Health

Metabolic syndrome significantly increases the risk of osteoarthritis, tendinopathies, and osteoporosis due to chronic inflammation and tissue dysregulation. However, these negative effects can be mitigated through physiotherapy and regular exercise.

By reducing inflammation, improving metabolic health, and promoting tissue repair, exercise and physiotherapy enhance musculoskeletal function and overall well-being. Individuals with metabolic syndrome can benefit from tailored exercise programs and physiotherapy interventions to manage joint pain, prevent injuries, and maintain strong bones and healthy tissues.

Luke Schembri, Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner

<http://www.genuinephysio.com/>

Image by Tung Lam from Pixabay

Geography Squadron celebrates 70 years in Ewell

28 March 2025



In a ceremony held on Saturday 15th March in **Ewell** the **135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers** commemorated their 70th anniversary at **Mercator House** (off Welbeck Close) by unveiling the first Ordnance Survey (OS) benchmark in over 25 years. This event not only celebrates the squadron's longstanding presence in Ewell but also highlights their historic ties with the OS, dating back to 1791.

A Legacy of Geographic Excellence

Established in 1948, the 135 Geographic Squadron has evolved into a pivotal Army Reserve unit, providing comprehensive geographic support to UK Defence operations. Their expertise encompasses surveying, terrain analysis, and the production and distribution of vital geographic materials. Over the years, squadron members have been deployed to various operational theatres, including Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Balkans, underscoring their critical role in supporting military operations.

The Significance of Ordnance Survey Benchmarks

Ordnance Survey benchmarks are physical markers that denote height above Ordnance Datum Newlyn, the standard reference point for elevation in mainland Great Britain. Traditionally etched onto enduring structures like buildings or bridges, these benchmarks have been integral to accurate mapping and surveying. However, with advancements in technology, the maintenance of these physical markers has ceased, making the recent installation at Mercator House particularly noteworthy.

Ceremonial Unveiling at Mercator House

The unveiling ceremony featured a parade by current squadron members and veterans, symbolizing the enduring camaraderie and dedication within the unit. Nick Bolton, Director General and CEO of Ordnance Survey, officiated the event, reflecting on the deep-rooted connection between OS and the 135 Geographic Squadron. He remarked, "I am proud to unveil such a permanent monument to the deep connection between Ordnance Survey and 135 Geographic Squadron."

The Officer Commanding 135 Geographic Squadron said: "This has been a fantastic opportunity for the Squadron to mark this significant milestone within the community of Epsom and Ewell. It also recognises the remarkable role OS Reservists played in our Squadron's early years and the deep geographic links that exist with OS today."

A Shared History: OS and Military Collaboration

The relationship between Ordnance Survey and the military is deeply entrenched in history. The OS's origins trace back to the 18th century when Major-General William Roy initiated a detailed survey of the Scottish Highlands, laying the groundwork for modern mapping techniques. This collaboration has persisted through significant historical events, with OS providing essential geospatial data during both World Wars and continuing to support military operations and national resilience efforts in contemporary times.

The establishment of the new benchmark at Mercator House not only honours the squadron's past achievements but also signifies a commitment to ongoing excellence in geographic support. As technological advancements continue to transform mapping and surveying, the enduring partnership between Ordnance Survey and the 135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers remains a cornerstone of the UK's defence infrastructure.

This commemorative event serves as a testament to the squadron's dedication and the pivotal role of accurate geographic information in safeguarding the nation.

Image: 135 Survey Engineer Regiment training in the 1950s

Epsom and Ewell's Record-Breaking Poppy Appeal

28 March 2025



The **Royal British Legion's** Epsom and Ewell branch has once again demonstrated the remarkable generosity of the local community, raising a record-breaking total of **£79,366.99** during the 2024 Poppy Appeal. This astounding figure, collected throughout the borough in November, marks an increase of **£16,000** from the previous year—an incredible achievement as collectors and supporters returned in full force after the pandemic.

Poppy Appeal Organiser **Amy Johnson**, alongside her dedicated deputies, coordinated an army of volunteers, young and old, who braved the autumn chill to collect donations across the **Ashley Centre, Sainsbury's Kiln Lane, local schools, shops, businesses, and various poppy stands** throughout Epsom and Ewell. The generosity of local residents ensured that the borough, known for its strong community spirit, once again surpassed expectations.

A special note of thanks goes to the **Ashley Centre and Sainsbury's Kiln Lane management teams**, whose continued support provided vital collection points for this year's appeal.

Reflecting on the significance of the funds raised, **Barb Warwick, Chair of RBL Epsom and Ewell**, stated:

"As we sadly say farewell to the last of our WWII service men and women, our mission now is to ensure that the new generation of Armed Forces personnel and

their families receive the support they need, no matter where or when they serve. We are secure in the knowledge that Epsom and Ewell, the smallest borough with the biggest heart, will rise to this challenge.”

The Royal British Legion continues its vital work providing welfare and support to serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families. Anyone in need of assistance, whether they have served in the past or are currently in the Armed Forces, is encouraged to reach out to **barb.warwick@virginmedia.com** for confidential support and guidance.

With the borough’s unwavering dedication, Epsom and Ewell have once again shown their commitment to remembering and supporting those who have served. **Lest we forget.**

Epsom’s World Mission Society Church of God response to social justice day

28 March 2025



February 20th, 2025, was a Thursday, but it was not just any Thursday—it was the **UN’s World Day of Social Justice**. Many people are unaware of this important day, observed annually on February 20th, which aims to promote **equality, solidarity, and human rights**, while addressing **poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion**.

How is World Day of Social Justice Observed?

There are many ways to take part in this day, including:

- Learning and researching social justice issues
- Supporting organisations through donations, volunteering, or spreading awareness
- Engaging in community activities

For more ideas on how to observe the day, visit the Awareness Days website.

Volunteers in Epsom Take Action

On **Wednesday, 26th February**, a group of volunteers from Epsom put social justice into action at the **Nourish Hub**. The volunteers, from the **World Mission Society Church of God**, commemorated the day by **donating food and volunteering**. This initiative was part of a larger campaign called “**Hold Hope!**”, which was carried out across **30 countries** to mark UN Social Justice Day.

The volunteers had been preparing for about a month. Initially unsure of what to donate, they obtained a **wish list** from the Nourish Hub and packed enough food for **15 to 20 families**. The **Nourish Hub staff** were extremely grateful, with the manager stating that the donation would significantly help in providing **nourishing meals**. The **deputy manager** was especially delighted, noting that the donation was almost equal to the food currently in stock.

What is the Nourish Hub?

The **Nourish Hub**, located in **Shepherd’s Bush**, is run by **UKHarvest**, an environmental charity dedicated to **reducing food waste and promoting healthy eating**. The hub is also supported by **Hammersmith and Fulham Council** and provides an average of **200 meals per day** to those in need.

Across the UK, including in **Epsom and Surrey**, food banks are working tirelessly to support struggling individuals and families. Often, we don’t give much thought to food banks, but **small donations can make a big difference**. As the saying goes, “**Every little helps.**”

Spreading Love and Raising Awareness

The volunteers wanted to **share love and raise awareness** of social justice, especially on this day. They found great fulfillment in helping others and hope their efforts inspire **you** to take action and support your local community.

The **Church of God**, which operates in **175 countries**, continues to engage in **diverse voluntary activities**. The **Epsom branch, located on East Street**, is planning more initiatives, including:

- **Donations to the Epsom & Ewell Foodbank**
- **Street clean-ups**
- **Help for the homeless**
- **Tree planting**
- **And more!**

Get Involved - Volunteering is Good for You!

Did you know that **volunteering is proven to improve well-being**? Helping others **boosts happiness and mental health**. If you have some free time, why not **get involved, make a difference, and brighten someone’s day—along with your own**?

Joseph Adams

Epsom Runner’s Tribute to Sister Raises Over £22,000 for Epilepsy Charity

28 March 2025



An Epsom man has completed an extraordinary fundraising challenge in memory of his sister, raising more than £22,000 for national charity Epilepsy Action.

Barry Ahearn, from Epsom, ran **27 half-marathons** over the past year to honour his sister, Abbie, who tragically passed away in September 2023 following a severe epileptic seizure. Barry's challenge was deeply symbolic—each half-marathon representing **one minute of the 27 minutes** his sister's brain was without oxygen while paramedics fought to save her life.

His final run took place on **Saturday, 8th March, in Battersea Park**, where he was joined by **40 fellow runners** and **150 supporters**, including family, friends, and representatives from Epilepsy Action.

A Challenge Driven by Love and Loss

Reflecting on the challenge, Barry said:

"Losing Abbie has been the hardest thing I've ever experienced. She was kind, compassionate, and full of life. Every day since she passed, I've felt emotional pain—so I decided to match it with physical pain and push myself to do something in her memory."

Abbie was just **three months away from her 30th birthday** when she suffered a fatal seizure. Having been diagnosed with epilepsy only six weeks earlier, her death came as a devastating shock to her loved ones.

Barry's journey has taken him across the UK, completing half-marathons in **London, Carsington Water, and even at his local park**, where he ran up and down a single path **55 times** to complete the 21km distance. Some runs were part of organised events, while others were solo challenges that tested his mental and physical endurance.

Community Spirit and Support

Throughout his challenge, Barry was supported by his **wife Naomi**, who not only cheered him on at every race but also ran parts of the final half-marathon with him.

"Seeing my best friends, family, and their children cheering me on has been so special. The solo runs were tough emotionally, but I knew I had people behind me every step of the way."

His efforts have not only raised funds but also **heightened awareness of epilepsy**, a condition that affects **over 600,000 people in the UK**, with **three people dying from epilepsy-related causes every day**.

An Impact Beyond Fundraising

Barry's campaign has been hailed as a remarkable achievement by **Epilepsy Action's Director of Fundraising, Philippa Cartwright**, who praised his determination and resilience:

"Barry's efforts are truly inspiring. The funds he and his team have raised will help support vital services, from Talk & Support groups to our helpline, ensuring people with epilepsy get the help they need."

Barry hopes that his sister's story will encourage more people to learn about the risks associated with epilepsy and push for better awareness and research.

"When I started this challenge, I wanted to raise awareness and funds. I can't measure the full impact it's had, but if this helps save even one life, it will have been worth it."

How to Support the Cause

Barry's fundraising page remains open for donations to **Epilepsy Action**, which continues to campaign for better services and support for those affected by epilepsy.

To contribute to Barry's campaign, visit: **JustGiving - Barry Ahearn's Fundraiser**

For more information on epilepsy and support services, visit **www.epilepsy.org.uk** or call the **Epilepsy Action helpline on 0808 800 5050**.