



Surrey smokers quitting for free

24 October 2024



Ex-smoker Councillor Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Public Health, visited the One You Surrey stop smoking service to find out how we're supporting smokers to quit.

Around 12% of adults in Surrey smoke, and from personal experience Mark knows that it can be tough to give up smoking. When he visited Stop Smoking Advisors Lottie and Tutua from the One You Surrey Stop Smoking Service, he found that there is lots of support available to help people in Surrey make this life-changing choice.

One You Surrey offer a free quitting service, to help residents make the first step towards a healthier and smoke-free life. With access to free quitting aids, including e-cigarettes, nicotine replacement patches and gum, as well as encouragement and support to guide smokers through their quitting journey, One You Surrey are there every step of the way. One You Surrey offer a personalised service, including 1:1 sessions and online support. Whether this is someone's first shot at quitting smoking, or whether they feel like they've tried it all, the advisors at One You Surrey are here to find what works. Smokers who quit with the help of a stop smoking service are 4 times more likely to quit for good, as Mark found.

Mark told us: *"The benefits of quitting smoking make this challenging journey well worth it!" After just 72 hours, you will already be able to breathe better and will have more energy. Your sense of taste and smell will improve, and quitting can boost your mood and help you to feel less stressed. And you could save close to £2000 a year, enough for a holiday or towards a new car."*

Smoking Cessation Lead Tutua shared: *"Last year we were able to support over 1500 people in Surrey to successfully quit smoking. I love seeing the benefits our clients gain through their time with us, from the positive financial impact of quitting right through to people being able to run around with their children or grandchildren without getting out of breath as easily."*

To find out how One You Surrey can support you, or someone you know, in your smoke-free journey, visit <https://oneyousurrey.org.uk/programmes/stop-smoking/>. It's well worth it!

Epsom and St Helier Hospitals in Desperate Need of Repairs

24 October 2024



Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals are in need of urgent repairs, with more than £150 million required to address crumbling infrastructure, according to the latest NHS data. Epsom and Ewell MP **Helen Maguire** has urged the Government to prioritise investment in the upcoming Budget to tackle these issues.

The data highlights that nearly £70 million of the required repairs are classified as 'high risk,' meaning a failure to address them promptly could lead to serious injury and significant disruption to healthcare services. Both hospitals have been struggling with deteriorating facilities for years, with St Helier Hospital facing particularly severe challenges, such as falling ceilings and condemned buildings.

One major issue is the division of emergency care teams across both sites, a problem that the proposed specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton is intended to resolve. However, delays in funding mean that these plans have not yet come to fruition, leaving local residents reliant on facilities that are increasingly unable to meet modern healthcare needs.

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, Liberal Democrat MP Helen Maguire has renewed her call for urgent financial support to clear the backlog of repairs and ensure that the hospitals can provide safe and effective care for local communities.

"It is scandalous that people in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead, and Leatherhead are being treated in hospitals that need millions of pounds in repairs," said Maguire. "When someone goes to the hospital, they should expect to be treated in a building that is safe. This is the bare minimum. We need to do far better. It is now down to this Government to rescue our NHS, which is why, at the Budget, the Chancellor must urgently use any changes to the borrowing rules to invest in hospitals here in Epsom and Ewell."

NHS Response

A spokesperson for the **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** acknowledged the extent of the challenges, stating: "We've spent £60 million in the past five years improving the facilities in our ageing hospitals, which are deteriorating faster than we can fix them. Local people deserve better, and we're ready to build a new state-of-the-art hospital and upgrade our existing sites, but urgently need investment to make this a reality."

The spokesperson also highlighted the outdated nature of parts of the hospital infrastructure, some of which predate the founding of the NHS. "The age of our buildings means they flood regularly, and when our lifts break down, we can't fix them because they don't make the parts anymore."

Plans for the new specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton aim to address these issues by consolidating highly skilled medical teams, providing round-the-clock care. This would alleviate the strain on the existing Epsom and St Helier hospitals, which will continue to provide 85% of local services, including outpatient appointments and scans.

The Way Forward

The pressing need for investment in the local NHS infrastructure is clear, with both the MP and the hospital trust calling for urgent action. As the Budget approaches, the focus will be on whether the Government will step up and provide the necessary funds to ensure that residents of Epsom and surrounding areas receive the healthcare services they deserve in safe and modern facilities.



Local residents will be closely watching developments in the Budget announcement, hoping that long-awaited improvements to the area's hospitals will finally become a reality.

Loads of coaches for Epsom tennis

24 October 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment committee has authorised the contracts for three tennis coaching providers in Epsom.

R&A Sport will be carrying out coaching sessions at Auriol Park, Sutton Tennis Coaching will be offering sessions at Alexandra Park and Callum Macarty Coaching operating at Court Recreation Ground.

From April, the council moved to a pay-to-play scheme on all its tennis courts. The decision was taken to make the courts self-sufficient with all funds raised being reinvested in maintenance and future improvements.

Since the pay-to-play system was introduced, the council has been committed to ensuring those of all ages, experience, and socio-economic backgrounds are able to participate in tennis. The council offered free tennis sessions throughout the summer, when 173 residents played free of charge.

In addition to this, as part of the tennis coaching contract, all tennis coaching providers are required to take part in the Barclays Free Park Tennis Initiative, offering at least one hour of free, supervised, community tennis activity at their designated location each weekend.

The council is also looking for local volunteers willing to be tennis activators. These activators will lead free tennis sessions in the parks on Saturday mornings. Until these sessions are up and running in all tennis courts across the borough, the council is offering two free, bookable sessions between 9-10am and 10-11am each Saturday.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Langley and Woodcote) Chair of the Environment Committee said:

"We are committed to the pay to play model which will future-proof our courts so that residents can enjoy access to tennis now and in years to come.

Residents can pay to play or purchase a membership, including a discounted membership for those in receipt of Universal Credit or Full Time Carers Allowance or with a disability.

We would also urge anyone interested in volunteering as a tennis activator at one of our courts to get in touch - we'd love to hear from you.

We're pleased to sign up three coaching providers, which not only provides extra investment income for the courts but also more opportunities for free coaching sessions."

Related reports:

Anyone for tennis?

LibDems call "Love All" for local tennis

Anyone for tennis? If you pay.

Tennis at 95 is the norm.

Image - C. Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd

Epsom & Ewell Council Greenlights Local Projects

24 October 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee has given its provisional backing to over £2 million in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for a variety of local projects, following the council's annual funding round. The funding round, which ran between 7 May and 18 June 2024, saw a total of 28 bids submitted—five for strategic CIL funding and 23 for neighbourhood CIL funding.

Community Infrastructure funding derives from money provided to the Council by developers.

In a significant outcome, three strategic CIL bids, totalling £1.755 million, were recommended for approval. These include £1.25 million for public realm enhancements in Ewell Village, £405,000 for a full-size 3G football pitch at Priest Hill, and £100,000 for a new clubhouse at Old Schools Lane, Ewell. However, bids for Epsom Playhouse lighting replacement and increasing capacity at local GP surgeries were not successful. The latter was deemed "desirable" rather than "essential," with other bids seen as higher priorities.

In terms of neighbourhood projects, six bids, amounting to £331,966, received backing. These include £85,000 for a new community building at Glyn Hall and £78,644 for footpath improvements at the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. Other successful bids include upgrades to playgrounds at Bourne Hall, Gateley Green, and Gibraltar, as well as street tree planting on Waterloo Road.

Despite the committee's overall approval, 17 neighbourhood bids did not make the cut, with reasons ranging from failing initial assessments to not scoring highly enough in evaluations. This includes several bids that did not meet the "best value" criteria set out in the council's CIL Spending Protocol.

A key moment in the meeting came when Liberal Democrat Councillor **Julie Morris** (College Ward) successfully proposed an amendment to include the Nam



Yang Martial Arts project for funding, which had initially been overlooked. Her proposal, seconded by Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), was passed by a majority, ensuring that the martial arts project will be considered for £161,250 in funding by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The council's decisions on the CIL funding allocations will now be subject to final approval by the Strategy and Resources Committee, as required by the Council's financial regulations.

Image Nam Yang Martial Arts Epsom figure courtesy <https://martialartsepsom.com/>

County pledge to Epsom charity's fight to end poverty

24 October 2024



In a significant move for the region, Surrey County Council (SCC) has signed Good Company's End Poverty Pledge, marking a bold step towards addressing the growing issue of poverty across the county. The pledge, which was approved on 8th October, coincides with the United Nations' International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year's theme of "acting together" underscores SCC's commitment to creating fairer and more inclusive communities.

Councillor Mark Nuti, SCC's Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, signed the pledge on behalf of the council. In doing so, SCC committed to developing a comprehensive, community-led Poverty Action Plan, working in collaboration with partners across the region. Councillor Nuti emphasised the urgent need to support both those already struggling to make ends meet and those at risk of falling into hardship.

"In signing the pledge, we are not only committing to support people who can't afford basic essentials like food and heating, but we are also standing with those who are on the brink of financial hardship. Poverty has a devastating effect on health and wellbeing, and the consequences ripple out into greater demand on public services," said Nuti. He highlighted the council's commitment to targeting welfare support where it's most needed and using its influence as a major organisation to "buy local," improve job opportunities, and advocate for essential changes to the benefit system.

This pledge is supported by the local charity Good Company, based in Epsom, and its East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission (ESPTC), a group working closely with individuals who have lived experience of poverty. Jonathan Lees, Founder and Managing Director of Good Company, hailed the pledge as a major step forward in the fight against poverty.

"Surrey is one of the wealthiest counties in the UK, yet we see people in our foodbank centres and pantries struggling daily to afford food and energy. Signing this pledge is an important move by SCC, and we hope that many more local organisations and individuals will join us in this fight. We can't tackle poverty alone—but together, we can make a difference," Lees stated.

SCC's Ongoing Efforts to Combat Poverty

This winter, SCC's health and welfare hub will serve as a crucial resource for those affected by rising living costs. It will provide information on Warm Welcomes and the Energy Advice Tool, grants for energy-efficient homes, and local foodbank locations. Last year, SCC's Warm Welcome venues saw 46,000 visitors, and 86,000 residents benefited from the Household Support Fund, which distributed much-needed assistance to those in financial crisis. This year, the council's Fuel Poverty programme has attracted nearly £1 million in funding, aimed at helping residents in or at risk of fuel debt.

Councillor Nuti acknowledged the strides made to help those in need but recognised the work ahead: "We'll continue to learn from those with first-hand experience of poverty, ensuring that our services respond more effectively in the future."

The Work of the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission

The Good Company's East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission (ESPTC) has played a pivotal role in shaping the county's approach to poverty. Launched in 2019, the ESPTC brings together individuals with lived experience of poverty and senior representatives from civic and business sectors to work collaboratively towards solutions. The Commission has helped raise awareness of poverty's root causes, and its efforts have led to tangible changes in local services.

For example, after hearing first-hand accounts from residents, a local housing association shifted its approach to customer care, ensuring that tenants struggling with rent payments are treated with compassion. The ESPTC also initiated a laptop recycling project, addressing digital exclusion by providing over 360 laptops to students from low-income families.

As Good Company embarks on the second phase of the ESPTC, its focus remains on building relationships and addressing key issues identified by Community Commissioners. The charity is committed to amplifying the voices of those affected by poverty, ensuring they are central to decisions on how to tackle it.

Upcoming Event: East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission Celebration

On Wednesday, 27th November, Good Company will be hosting a special event to celebrate the work of the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission over the past 18 months. The event, which will take place at Bourne Hall in Ewell from 11am to 1:30pm, will showcase the transformational journey of the Commission's members and explore the exciting ideas and plans for future change.

This celebration is a chance for the community to come together and hear about the Commission's work to create long-term solutions to poverty in East Surrey. Tickets are free, and all are welcome to register online.

With Surrey County Council's pledge and the continued work of Good Company, there is renewed hope for a future where poverty is no longer an invisible problem, but one actively tackled by local communities, organisations, and government alike.

For more information and to register for the event, visit the Good Company's Eventbrite page.

Image: Mart Production

Nescot proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant

24 October 2024



North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) is proud to have officially signed the Armed Forces Covenant at a special event at the college today (16 October). The Covenant is a formal commitment to those who serve and have served that they will be treated with fairness and respect, and a recognition of the valuable attributes they bring to the workplace.

The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) was signed at the event by Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee KHS QVRM DL VR, Head Army Medical Services Reserve, Army HQ.

By signing the AFC, Nescot has pledged to uphold its key principles and to recognise the critical contribution that the Armed Forces community make to our country.

Nescot has already been awarded the Bronze ERS Award for the college's commitment to the Armed Forces.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot said, "Nescot is extremely proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and pledge to continue to show our support for the Armed Forces community, both as an education and training provider and as an employer.

"Indeed, Nescot's first Principal, Colonel Thomas Buchanan was a decorated army veteran of 'legendary coolness and bravery'. He was admired for his compassion, foresight, leadership and encouragement. In 1964 he became Deputy Lieutenant for Surrey, and was appointed an OBE for services to education in 1970. I am very proud to stand in his shoes today and to do something that I believe he would have been proud of and that continues his legacy."

Julie Kapsalis added, "We continue to have a unique role as an educational institution in providing opportunities for members of the Armed Forces to further their education and enhance their career prospects. We are also committed to being an Armed Forces friendly employer. We recognise the unique skills and experiences that members of the Armed Forces bring to our community. Their leadership, discipline, and resilience enrich our campus culture and provide valuable perspectives that benefit all students."

The event at the college included a flag raising ceremony by students representing our Public Services cohort, Leo, Skye and Poppy.

Leo, a student on our Level 3 Public Services programme said, "It's an honour to be part of the Covenant signing event today. I am interested in a military career and it's great that we get a chance to have visits and opportunities to interact with the Armed Forces here at Nescot."

Through our Public Services courses, our students are offered regular engagement opportunities with the Armed Forces as part of their training and also take part in the annual Poppy Appeal with the Royal British Legion.

Earlier in the day, our Public Services students benefitted from inspirational talks in the college's theatre from Brigadier Banerjee, Head Army Medical Services Reserve who spoke to them about some of the amazing experiences from his career, and from Ben Trevan from Nescot's Foundation Learning team and British Army Reservist with The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Ben Trevan spoke to the students about his role as a Learning Support Assistant at the college and as a Reservist. He said, "I have been a Reservist for two years now. Although the role can be challenging, it offers a great sense of camaraderie. I have been able to use my transferrable skills from both, teaching and my role as a Reservist. More importantly, I am able to fit my Reservist role around my teaching job. I am very grateful and thankful to my employer, Nescot for their support with respecting my commitments and allowing me the time to train. The signing of the Armed Forces Covenant reiterates the fact that I'm supported both by the Army and Nescot, which are both a part of my daily life."

Invitees at the event also had opportunities for networking and were invited to tour Nescot's facilities including the college's cutting edge immersive learning spaces.

The event which was held at the college's Skills Park was also attended by representatives from the Armed Forces community and local organisations from: Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Greater London (GL RFCA); 135 Geographic Squadron; Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion; Royal Navy; Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; Combat Stress, Nescot staff and students.

More information about the covenant, including how organisations can help support the forces community, is available on the Armed Forces Covenant website.

Related report:

[Surrey Scouts honour Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Image: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO, Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee, Head Army Medical Reserve, Army HQ, sign the Armed Forces Covenant at Nescot.

Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future

24 October 2024



A public meeting has been scheduled for October 17th, 2024, at the **Epsom Sports Club**, located next to **Epsom Hospital**, to discuss the future of local healthcare services. The meeting, organized by the **Epsom and Ewell's Residents' Associations**, will be centred on the evolving plans for Epsom Hospital and the broader health services in the area. The keynote speaker, **James Blythe**, Managing Director of the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust, will provide an update on the trust's long-term plans, including the new Specialist Emergency Care Hospital (SECH) in Sutton and the modernization of both Epsom and St Helier hospitals. The event will be followed by a Q&A session, allowing local residents to voice their concerns and ask questions directly to the leadership.

This meeting follows recent developments within the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust, which is moving forward with a £500 million project to build the SECH in Sutton. This new hospital will centralize acute services such as emergency care and surgery, while 85% of other services will remain at Epsom and St Helier hospitals, ensuring local residents continue to have access to a wide range of healthcare services nearby. The new SECH, located on the Sutton Hospital site, is designed to enhance patient outcomes by co-locating with the Royal Marsden Hospital and the London Cancer Hub.

Epsom and Ewell's newly elected MP, **Helen Maguire**, has made healthcare a key priority in her first 100 days in office. Maguire has been an advocate for the new hospital in Sutton, meeting with the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust to see that the project moves forward without delays. In a press release marking her 100th day in office, Maguire emphasized her commitment to ensuring that the SECH is built and that Epsom and St Helier hospitals are modernized to better serve the local community. She has also scheduled a meeting with Health Secretary Wes Streeting to gain more insights into the government's broader healthcare strategy.



Maguire's focus on healthcare comes at a time when the trust is also addressing other critical issues such as managing its financial constraints while improving patient services. Maguire attended the trust's recent Annual Public Meeting, underscoring the importance of the SECH in addressing long-standing challenges.

Local residents are encouraged to attend the public meeting on October 17th to stay informed about the future of their healthcare services and to have their say in the discussions about these transformative plans for Epsom and its surrounding areas.

Event Details:

Topic: The Future for Epsom Hospital and Local Health Services
Date: October 17th, 2024
Time: 7:30 PM
Venue: Epsom Sports Club, next to Epsom Hospital
Speaker: James Blythe, Managing Director, Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust
Format: Presentation followed by a Q&A session with refreshments

Epsom Station gets an artistic makeover

24 October 2024



In the hustle and bustle of daily life, railway stations often feel like transient spaces where passengers rush through without a second thought. However, at Epsom Station, something unique is happening. Thanks to the *Art@the Station* initiative from **The Art Society UK**, along with a group of talented young students from Epsom and Ewell's own **Nescot**, the station has become a vibrant hub of art and creativity, offering a refreshing experience to commuters.

As part of the *Art@the Station* initiative, art and design students from Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) have created striking artwork inspired by Epsom's most iconic landmarks. The project, designed to showcase emerging talent in public spaces, not only adds life to the station but also provides passengers with a more enriched and inspiring environment. The station's subway now serves as a gallery, featuring bold, colourful images that celebrate the town's rich heritage.

Angie Child from **The Art Society Epsom** led this creative transformation as project manager. The theme, **Sense of Place**, invited students to capture the essence of Epsom—its famous racecourse, clock tower, and other key sites. The result is a stunning display that has already stopped passengers in their tracks, prompting them to admire and even photograph the eye-catching designs.

"I am delighted with the outcome of the wonderful images the Nescot students have created for Epsom station," said Angie. "The students went above and beyond to fulfil the brief. Even while we were still installing the artwork, passengers hurried past but stopped to admire and take photos of the beautiful, colourful pieces."

The project, supported by a grant from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), is not only a boost for the station's appearance but also a significant achievement for the students involved. They had the chance to showcase their work to a wider audience, gaining real-world experience in the process. Special recognition was given to Nescot's graphic design tutor, Miles Merritt, who encouraged and guided the students throughout the project, integrating it as an exciting extension of their coursework.

Out of more than twenty designs, the standout works from George Pearson, Alfie Carr, Callum Jones, and Wiktoria Sawicka won the competition. These students, all from the local area, embraced Epsom's history and reimagined it in vibrant graphic designs. Their interpretations offer a fresh perspective on the town's heritage, creating a dynamic fusion of past and present.

GTR's Community Engagement Manager, Rob Whitehead, worked closely with the students, even providing them with rail tickets to visit an art exhibition in London as part of their creative journey. "We're thrilled to support this initiative in Epsom and showcase the incredible talent of Nescot students," Rob said. "Our Station Partners Small Grant fund has helped bring this fantastic community project to life."

The *Art@the Station* project isn't limited to Epsom. Younger students from Epsom Downs School also contributed, creating a large mural titled *Rockets* at Tattenham Corner Station. The initiative will continue into 2025, with more artwork planned for display at Ewell East Station, ensuring that local creativity continues to enrich the travel experience.

This collaboration between The Art Society, Nescot, and GTR is a powerful example of the impact community-driven projects can have. By bringing art into public spaces, these initiatives not only enhance the visual appeal of stations but also provide passengers with a deeper connection to local culture. Moreover, they offer younger generations a valuable opportunity to actively participate in and be recognised within their community.

For now, as commuters pause to admire the bright, bold designs at Epsom station, one thing is clear: art has the power to transform even the most ordinary spaces into something extraordinary.

Romana Sustar

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasantar/>

Find out more:

Nescot, The Art and Design Department:

The Art Society Epsom

<https://www.theartssocietyepsom.org.uk/>

GTR

Art @ the Station

<https://theartssociety.org/arts-news-features/art-station>

Winter fuel support in Epsom

24 October 2024



Changes to the Winter Fuel Payments means that many people are worried that they may not be able to heat their homes this winter.

For the eighth year running, Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) has teamed up with the Rotary Clubs of Epsom and Ewell to bring much needed support to those in the borough in need of help with paying fuel bills this winter.

This year, residents in the Epsom & Ewell borough are being asked to donate any amount to Project Wenceslas to help those affected. All funds will help those struggling with electricity and gas bills, as well enable energy efficient appliances to be purchased. CAEE manages the distribution for the benefit for those in fuel poverty, direct to fuel suppliers with no deductions for costs or fees.

Lisa Davis, CEO, Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell, said:

"With changes to the Winter Fuel Payments this winter, an increased number of people in our community are worrying about heating their homes. Many people relied on the Winter Fuel Payments to help manage their energy usage and budgets. Some people may be eligible for benefits but many may not."

"Project Wenceslas is more important than ever to provide that much needed support and peace of mind for individuals and families across the borough who are struggling. Please get in touch if either you want to donate or you are in need of support."

To find out more about donating, please contact via the websites epsomrotary.uk or ewellrotary.club and search for Project Wenceslas.

If you are struggling with fuel bills, then contact Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell on 0808 278 7963 (Mon-Fri, 10am - 4pm) or see our website: www.caee.org.uk.

Epsom Pantry has a sister in Banstead

24 October 2024



Sat bang in the middle between M&S and Waitrose on Banstead high street, a new community food store has opened to help people struggling to buy affordable groceries in Surrey.

Surrey's second pantry officially opened October 7, stocked with donations and surplus food from supermarkets which would otherwise be thrown away. For just £5 a week, members of the pantry can receive £30-35 worth of food and household items.

"We want shopping to be a dignified experience," said Project Manager Bex. She explained that everyone can access good quality food and members have the choice of what they want to buy, like in any shop.

After a soft launch in mid-September, the pantry already has about 75 members despite no advertising. "There is a really nice buzz when it opens up," Bex said. "People sometimes shop at the same times to meet people every week, or share recipes if buying the same ingredients."

Located on Banstead's high street, Pantry Manager Ashley said it was important for there "not to be any shame associated" with coming to the food store. "Living in Surrey is can be really difficult when you don't have a disposable income."

Although Banstead features low on the level of deprivation in Surrey, Ashley explained that there are pockets of hidden food poverty. "Sometimes where there is obvious need, there is obvious help," Ashley said. Banstead's pantry aims to address this issue in providing support for people who may be missed in areas more affluent.

Epsom Pantry first opened in July 2022, as the cost-of-living crisis was beginning to pinch. The typically leafy market town has been ranked in the top 10% of least deprived areas in the UK. Now, with around 400 members to the pantry, Epsom is now oversubscribed.

Bex, who used to work at Epsom Pantry, said there was a real community feel. "People used to come in at similar times, rely on each other and check-in how people were doing," Bex said.

The mission of the Pantry is to bridge the gap between food banks and commercial grocery stores. Some people may not be eligible for crisis support from Food banks but are still struggling to make ends meet in their weekly shop.

Fresh fruit and veg is free, with high value items like Kellogg's Crunchy Nut and Yorkshire Tea more restricted. Standard cupboard essential like pasta, tinned beans, herbs and biscuits are also on offer.

Customers can sign up to the Pantry and answer a few questions about their financial situation. Then, they will be invited in for an assessment to see if the Pantry is the right support for them or whether they need any other help.

Beyond the food store operations, the pantry is also looking at putting on cooking classes, sewing workshops, energy saving guides to help members save money and develop community.

The initiative is led by a partnership between Raven Housing Trust (RHT), Good Company Surrey, as well as Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. RHT's housing association and the council can point people in the direction of the service who may be eligible for support.

Link: <https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/pantry-listings/banstead-pantry-surrey/>

Food bank locations: <https://epsomewell.foodbank.org.uk/locations/>



Image: Project Manager Bex and Pantry Manager Ashley outside Banstead Pantry. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)