

Surrey teacher banned for underwear social media pupil chat

18 July 2024



A Surrey teacher has been banned after messaging pupils about thongs, favourite underwear, and shaving.

[The Teachers' Regulation Agency (TRA) has not published the name of the school in the interests of pupils. The Epsom and Ewell Times has decided not to publish the name of The Teacher for the same reason.]

The Teacher has been prohibited indefinitely from the profession and can no longer teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England.

The 30-year-old can apply to have the order set aside after June 29, 2026 and has one month to appeal the Secretary of State's decision.

In a Teachers' Regulation Agency (TRA), she was found to have behaved unacceptably and brought the teaching profession into disrepute after failing to keep professional boundaries with pupils between February 2023 and May 2023.

The panel, which sat in her absence after The Teacher declined to attend the June 2024 hearing, found she communicated with pupils via social media - discussing underwear, relationships, shaving, body piercing and vaping. The TRA did not name the school in their report, to prevent undue harm to pupils.

The Teacher was also said to have met up with pupils outside school and later tried to conceal her behaviour - asking them not to communicate with her, while her social accounts were being monitored and deleting exchanges.

The report reads: "Instead of teaching the dangers of social media to young children taking their initial steps into the online world, The Teacher actively exposed them to such risks.The panel therefore found that The Teacher's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute."

In a signed statement of agreed facts, The Teacher admitted the allegations in full.

They read: The Teacher admits that she engaged in discussions... in connection with underwear. The Teacher accepts that she initiated a conversation ...about the topic of thongs, which was in response to (a pupil) asking what underwear The Teacher owned. The Teacher also accepts that she received messages... in which (a pupil) described what underwear she liked. The Teacher also accepts (a pupil) sent The Teacher internet images of underwear that (a pupil) liked. The Teacher accepts that she discussed with (a pupil) what underwear The Teacher owned and how [they] wore their underwear",

The Panel Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education report read:

The teacher also messaged about whether she had a boyfriend and "what things put her off".

A week after pausing communications while accounts were being monitored, messaging started up again, with the teacher telling the pupil "not to tell anyone about their contact."

The Teacher also admitted deleting a large majority of messages in an effort to conceal what had been sent. She also admitted to deliberately misleading the school over the nature and extent of her communication with pupils on social media.

The report read: "At the school's suspension meeting, The Teacher accepts that she told the school the pupil had been in communication with her for one week and that The Teacher had been trying to 'bat her away'."

The Teacher is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. She may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 29 June 2026, 2 years from the date of the order.

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Epsom UCA artists wear their mortarboards

18 July 2024



Last week, the next generation of artists and designers from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Epsom received their degrees alongside Yinka Ilori MBE and Jonathan Anderson, who were awarded honorary doctorates for their outstanding contributions to the creative industries.

Held at Royal Festival Hall in London, the fashion designer Jonathan Anderson shared his experience of being a student with dyslexia and starting his own company.

He encouraged graduates not to fear failure, but to be curious, to take risks, and above all else avoid getting stuck in the mud!

He also admitted that he thought rules were useless and reflected on the value of authenticity:

"Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. Steal, adapt, borrow, he said.

The British-Nigerian artist and designer, Yinka Ilori MBE, who is known for his bold use of colour and playful designs added:

"For as long as I can remember, I've dreamt of being an artist... If you told my younger self where I would be today, he wouldn't believe you."

He also urged graduates to: *"Never stop dreaming. . .always say 'yes' to new opportunities. We live in a world that is all about connection and connectivity. Above all, have trust in yourself, and listen to your intuition."*



Prof. Jane Roscoe UCA Vice-Chancellor

The graduation ceremonies saw over 3,000 students from UCA receive their degrees and attending for the first time was UCA's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor **Jane Roscoe**, who said:

"The global arts and creative sector are vibrant – there are so many opportunities, and the major challenges facing our planet will need creatives and creativity in every shape and form. You, of course, have all been prepared for this future and your UCA degree has given you the skills and is your ticket to success."

Spread across three days, the ceremonies marked the culmination of 3,000 students' time at UCA, before taking the next step on their journey in the creative industries.

Campaign to keep local child cancer services local

18 July 2024



Wandsworth Council is leading a campaign against the NHS decision to move children's cancer services from two South London hospitals into Central London and the new Labour Government will be asked to step in. NHS England announced its decision to move the children's cancer centre based jointly at **St George's Hospital, Tooting**, and **The Royal Marsden, Sutton**, to Evelina London Children's Hospital, Lambeth, in March.

Wandsworth has now confirmed it will refer the decision to new Health Secretary Wes Streeting in a bid for him to intervene. The council is particularly concerned about the prospect of parents having to travel via public transport into Central London with immunosuppressed kids to reach the Evelina.

The authority said Richmond, Kingston, Merton, Sutton and Surrey councils are set to join the cross-party campaign, as children in their boroughs currently receive care at the existing children's cancer centre. Richmond approved plans to challenge the decision in May.

Opposition to the plans began to grow after the NHS launched a consultation on two options for the future location of the centre last year – either moving it entirely to St George's or to the Evelina. The centre has provided specialist children's cancer services to those aged 15 and under living in South London, Kent, most of Surrey, Brighton and Hove, Medway and East Sussex for 25 years.

The NHS said it has to move the centre as a new national service specification in 2021 outlined very specialist children's cancer treatment services must be on the same site as a paediatric intensive care unit and other specialist children's services. The Royal Marsden does not have a paediatric intensive care unit, meaning a small number of children with cancer requiring intensive care are transferred safely by ambulance to St George's every year.

Labour Wandsworth Council leader Simon Hogg urged Mr Streeting to work with local authorities challenging the decision to find ways to keep services at St George's. He said: "We have opposed these plans to move specialist children's cancer care from St George's from the start. Our serious concerns remain – getting to Evelina hospital through Central London traffic will be challenging at the best of times. Travelling by public transport is not an option for vulnerable children who are on immunosuppressant medication. So there has to be a better solution to these plans."

Local MPs have also publicly opposed the plans. Tooting MP Dr Rosena Allin-Khan described the decision to move services from St George's as 'deeply disappointing' when it was announced in March, and signed a letter to previous Health Secretary Victoria Atkins asking her to review it. The letter was also signed by Putney MP Fleur Anderson, Mitcham and Morden MP Siobhain McDonagh, Richmond Park MP Sarah Olney and Twickenham MP Munira Wilson.

Services are not expected to move until 2026 at the earliest. An NHS London spokesperson said: "Evelina London has been chosen as the future location for the children's cancer centre following a rigorous process, including involving clinical advisers, parents, charities, nurses and research staff. The future centre will stand ready to give cutting-edge treatments that require intensive care on site, like other major centres worldwide.

"Service reconfiguration is rarely easy and we recognise that during consultation, parents and families raised a number of concerns about the change in location,

including about travelling further into London, and what that will mean for them. Our focus now is on detailed implementation planning which takes all of these concerns into account to support families and staff.”

An Evelina spokesperson added: “We are fully committed to working with patients, their families, staff from the current service, and other partners to design the new service with children, young people and staff at its heart. This will ensure continuity of care during the transition period and a plan for the safe transfer of the service.”

A St George’s spokesperson said: “We understand the concerns being raised by our communities who want to keep specialist children’s cancer care at St George’s. We are working with NHS England and our partners and will continue to provide outstanding care to children and their families throughout this process.”

Charlotte Lillywhite - reporter.

Image credit Jean Barrow Licence

Teen suicide risk underestimated by CAMHs

18 July 2024



An “underestimation” of suicide risk and significant mental health ‘failings’ contributed to the death of a vulnerable teenager, a Senior Coroner has found.

Locket Williams, described by their family as “a lovely person with a huge character”, was just 15 years old when they tragically killed themselves in September 2021.

Senior Coroner Richard Travers concluded that there were a number of key failures by Surrey and Borders Partnership (SABP) NHS Foundation Trust’s Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which contributed to the death of the vulnerable teenager, who goes by they/them pronouns. The three-week inquest concluded Friday 31 May.

Locket’s older sister, Emily, said: “Hearing the coroner recognize what we have believed for three long years—that failures by CAMHS contributed to Locket’s death and ultimately meant Locket lost all hope—is heartbreaking.

“We’re thankful for the Coroner’s respect for Locket’s identity, which was so important to them, and we sincerely hope this process will help prevent more tragic deaths like Locket’s in the future.”

Described by their family as “vibrant” with a “massive heart”, Locket “brought colour to everything they participated in” their family said.

They had a long history of mental health difficulties, resulting in self-harming behaviours and three previous suicide attempts throughout within seven months of 2021.

Evidence heard at the inquest highlighted “illogical conclusions” that Locket was deemed “low risk” by clinicians, despite their ongoing suicidal ideation and three suicide attempts in close succession, the family’s lawyers said.

Coroner Travers found that Locket’s high risk of suicide was “underestimated” by clinicians, as there was an “insufficient account” of Locket’s long-running risk, which meant Locket did not receive the treatment they needed.

Commenting on the Coroner’s findings, the family’s solicitor, Elle Gauld from Simpson Millar’s public law team, said: “Given Locket’s three suicide attempts and deteriorating mental health, CAMHS’ approach repeatedly defied logic and palpable evidence of suicidality, bypassing the patient’s express wishes and placing an unrealistic burden on a family already in crisis. Treatment was not commenced in a timely manner”

Long waiting lists for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and a shortage of therapists meant that, although clinicians all agreed CBT was necessary, Locket remained at home. Without access to the required support and treatment, their mental health continued to deteriorate, the lawyers for the family said.

Coroner Travers said there was a ‘failure’ to assess the likelihood Locket could be kept safe while waiting eight months for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (‘CBT’), a treatment she was ready and willing to engage in.

Failures in communication between social services and CAMHS were also identified, leading to crucial information being missed in Locket’s assessment and care. CAMHS failed to attend Core Groups meetings held by social services to protect Locket, as a vulnerable child.

Locket was passed from service to service, with no continuous care from the same clinicians or who was responsible for Locket’s care, lawyers said.

Speaking of the family’s loss, Locket’s mother, Hazel Williams, said: “We hope the lessons learned from their death highlight the urgent need for change and prevent future tragedies. We are grateful for the thoroughness of this inquest and the potential for positive changes in managing mental health services for young people.”

SABP has 56 days to respond to the senior coroner’s findings. Coroner Tavers has asked the NHS Trust to report whether there is now a system in place to ensure that young people referred to CAMHS are seen and treated promptly, and that clinicians are acting in accordance with the Trust’s guidelines.

A Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust spokesperson said: “We are extremely saddened by the tragic death of Locket Williams and our deepest sympathies go to their family and friends.

“We are carefully reflecting on the Coroner’s findings and the questions we have been asked and will respond within the given timeframe.”

Image: Locket. (Credit: Simpson Millar law firm) Coroners Court in background - Google

Scoutabout success for Surrey

18 July 2024



More than 6,000 Scouts and Guides and adults from **Surrey** enjoyed an action-packed weekend of activities over the weekend of 28th to 30th June 2024.

Scouts, Guides, and adults from **Epsom & Ewell** joined other Scouts and Guides from Surrey.

The first Scoutabout was at Ardingly back in 1984 and and thus event 40 years was celebrated. The boys and girls aged 10 to 14 had the opportunity to take part in more than 100 activities at the three-day Scoutabout event at the South of England Showground in Ardingly, West Sussex, the only site big enough and close enough to house the Scouts and Guides of Surrey for the weekend.

There were over 150 activities including Bus Driving, car driving, bungee running, kayaking, archery, air rifle shooting and caving, to name just a few. The young people were able to try something new, in a safe environment, gain skills-for-life and make new friends at the same time.

The weekend will not have been possible without the hard work of a determined team of 1,500 adult volunteers from across Surrey who have carried out a range of roles to make Scoutabout a reality.

From camp cooks to a doctor and from fire teams to IT engineers, adult volunteers would have shared their skills to benefit these young people.

One of the biggest tasks has been to source the huge number of activities that make Scoutabout such a success.

On the Friday night Sour Kix played for the camp at the opening ceremony and on the Saturday night Doubting Thomas and The Ariston played on stage.

Over the weekend Scoutabout FM was broadcasting and along with competitions (Thanks to Guildford Flames, Bentley Copse Activity Centre, Airfix and Surrey Sports Park for the donation of prizes) Explorer Scouts were able to present shows.

Bear Grylls, Chief Scout said “A special message for all of you at Scoutabout 2024 at Ardingly showground. I really hope all of you have a brilliant weekend together, look after each other and most of all have fun. So proud of what you all do, helping other people always, showing the true Scouting spirit, you are all amazing”.

Marcus Martin-Burns, County Youth Commissioner for Surrey Scouts said “Seeing 5,000 Scouts & Guides all together for one weekend at Scoutabout has been truly awesome, giving them the opportunities to learn skills for life, make new friends and discover new activities. From Archery to Zorbing, Scoutabout had it all and a big thank you goes to all the leaders and service crew who made this weekend possible.”

Eashan, aged 10 from Epsom & Ewell district (**1st Ewell Court**) said “The best bit of Scoutabout was the fun activities, I enjoyed the bungee slip slide because its fast and fun and gets you active.”

Lucy, aged 11 from Leatherhead district (3rd Bookham) said “I liked the quad biking as I have not done it before, and it was really fun.”

- The first Scoutabout was at Ardingly in 1984.
- Scoutabout happens every three years (apart from this one, due to the pandemic the 2024 one puts it back into a tri-annual event.
- Scouts are for Boys and Girls aged 10.5 to 14.
- Guides are for girls aged 10-14
- Individuals are 15% less likely to suffer from mood swings and anxiety if you’ve been a Scout or Guide. Source: Cohort study by the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow, 2016

Neil Wibberley

10,000 mile pilgrimage to Epsom

18 July 2024



John Bates, grandson of Beatrice Bates, travelled over 10,000 miles from Australia to Horton Cemetery in Epsom to pay his respects to Beatrice. His grandmother is one of 9000 buried in Europe’s largest and now abandoned asylum cemetery. The **Friends of Horton Cemetery** continue to battle to retrieve this important graveyard from a property speculator. **A petition**, already signed by over 1200 supporters, calls on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to change its damaging opinion that the Cemetery is “amenity woodland”.

Here is John Bates’ personal account of his May 2024 pilgrimage from Adelaide to Epsom.

In loving memory of Beatrice Miriam Bates, a woman of enduring strength and grace, whose life and legacy continue to resonate deeply within our family. Beatrice’s journey came to an end in 1933 at West Park Hospital in Epsom, Surrey, leaving behind a mystery that lingered for decades. It was a personal mission of mine to uncover the truth of her final resting place, a mission that revealed not only her burial site but also a profound connection to our family’s history.

Beatrice Miriam Bates was laid to rest in Horton Cemetery, a place that, despite the passage of time, faced the threat of being erased by development. Discovering her burial site through ancestry records was a pivotal moment, one that brought closure to our family and deepened our understanding of Beatrice’s life. Horton Cemetery, overgrown and largely forgotten by many, stands as a testament to the lives of those who came before us, including Beatrice.

In 2024, ninety-one years after Beatrice’s passing, I made a personal pilgrimage from Australia to Horton Cemetery. Walking around the overgrown grounds, I felt the weight of history and the importance of preserving this sacred space. The memorial at the entrance stands as a solitary guardian of the memories held within, a symbol of resistance against the encroaching tide of development.

The ‘Friends of Horton Cemetery’ have been instrumental in championing the cause to protect this site. Their dedication ensures that the stories of those buried there, including Beatrice’s, are remembered and honoured. It is a cause that resonates deeply with me, as I believe in the importance of preserving Horton Cemetery for all the souls who rest there and for the relatives who seek a connection to their past.

Beatrice’s story, accessible to all through the efforts of the ‘Friends of Horton Cemetery,’ shines a light on her resilience and spirit. Her life, though marked by challenges, is a testament to the courage and strength that define our family. Her memory serves as a beacon, guiding us to cherish our heritage and to honour the lives of those who came before us.

As we reflect on Beatrice’s life, we are reminded of the importance of family, history, and the relentless pursuit of truth. Her legacy is a testament to the enduring power of love and remembrance. Through the efforts to preserve Horton Cemetery, Beatrice and all those resting there are given the respect and recognition they deserve.

In honour of Beatrice Miriam Bates, let us continue to share her story and all the stories of those buried in Horton Cemetery and protect the places that hold our collective memories. Her spirit lives on in each of us, a symbol of resilience and hope for generations to come.

Rest in peace, dear Beatrice. Your story will never be forgotten.

With all our love,

Your Grandson.... John E. M. Bates.

Beatrice Bates full story can be read on The Friends of Horton Cemetery **website** [HERE](#)

Epsom kickboxers seek funds for world championships

18 July 2024



Epsom based **Absolute Martial Arts**, a well-regarded martial arts school, is celebrating a significant achievement this year. Thirteen of their talented students have qualified and earned the honour to represent England at the WKC World Championships in Portugal.

However, the path to this prestigious event comes with considerable financial challenges.

In the world of kickboxing, athletes receive no financial backing. Craig and Rachel Harrington, passionate owners of Absolute Martial Arts, commented, “Unfortunately, kickboxing is a sport that requires complete self-funding.” This means every expense – from flights and accommodation to entry fees and team uniforms – must be covered by the athletes themselves.

To raise some of these costs, Absolute Martial Arts is hosting a free fundraising event at **Wallace Fields Infants School** in Epsom on July 21st. The event promises to be a fun-filled day, featuring a “sparathon”, various activities for children and adults alike, a BBQ with raffles, and so much more. The Harringtons further mentioned that they would love for this event to raise awareness, not just for kickboxing as a sport, but also for the athletes who go to great lengths to achieve their dreams.

Notably, the club holds a strong track record, having achieved success in previous years. During the last championship, they sent seven fighters who brought home an impressive tally of four gold and three silver medals— a true testament to their skill and dedication. This year, with thirteen qualifiers, the expectations are even higher, though so are the financial demands. As a result, Absolute Martial Arts is reaching out to the local community within Epsom and Ewell, counting on a strong turnout at their upcoming fundraising event.

Mark your calendars for July 21st at Wallace Fields Infants School and join them for the fundraiser. The support of local residents can make a significant difference in helping these young athletes realize their dreams on the world stage.

For more information, visit Absolute Martial Arts’ website or contact Michelle Downes at doodab@blueyonder.co.uk or 07540 460680.

Taxing question for Surrey’s private schools

18 July 2024



Labour’s proposal to add VAT to private school fees has ignited a fierce debate in Surrey, home to numerous prestigious independent schools. The policy, aimed at

generating £1.5 billion to improve state education, has drawn both sharp criticism and staunch support from local residents, educators, and politicians

One Surrey grandmother explained that her grandchildren go to private school and says she thought it is a “ridiculous” policy on “hard-working people”.

Labour has said that if it wins the general election it plans to remove tax exemptions that private schools enjoy, generating around £1.5billion. The most significant of these is scrapping VAT exemptions on private school fees.

Critics say taxing private schools does not hit the super rich but hurts middle-income parents. Cllr Kate Fairhurst (Conservative/ Reigate) said: “I am very concerned that Labour’s plans will punish families striving and investing for a better future for their children.”

Private schools could make cuts to absorb the added VAT cost, Labour Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves has said, so it is not passed on to parents.

Profoundly objecting, Roger Jones, a previous Conservative candidate for Dorking. said: “Private schools would have to axe a third of its [departments]”, causing the most affluent of pupils to move to other fee paying schools” or in the public sector. He added the suggestion of cuts as an option is rooted in the Labour’s envy of the privately educated.

With the money raised, Labour said it will improve standards in state schools by employing 6,500 teachers, improving schools and careers advice, as well as helping pay for mental health support staff in every secondary school.

Surrey has around 140 private schools: including primary, secondary and special schools. Fees vary between schools, but the cost of independent education in Surrey is above the national average.

They range from £18,975-£38,367 per year for day pupils and from £25,290-£47,535 per year for boarding. With an addition of 20% tax, this would hike the figures to £22,770- £46,040 annually for day pupils and £30,348- £57,042 for students at boarding schools. To those who can just about squeeze £18k for a year of schooling, the added VAT may make the private sector unaffordable.

“It would be a huge backward step for the county,” added Roger Jones He said: “Should Labour find themselves in government, then this policy will disadvantage every single child of school age and those yet to come.” He argued that taxing private schools would cost the state more than it is projected to generate as more children would move to the public school system.

One woman, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed concerns that the influx of previously private schooled children in the state sector could put strain on already struggling public schools. “Walloping private schools isn’t going to make the state schools better and the money raised will be a drop in the ocean compared to the financial needs of the sector,” she added.

Concerns were raised about the tax not affecting prestigious schools, like Eton, where the woman claimed the pupils are from very wealthy families. She said: “The imposition of 20% VAT won’t even begin to affect the attitude of [those] who are brought up by such schools to believe that they are superior to everyone else.”

Twenty-three-year-old Grace, who went to a comprehensive school in leafy Esher, said raising fees could increase elitism in private schools, making bullying and student dynamics worse. She said: “It’s no secret that private schools have a self-proclaimed elitist culture, and increasing VAT will mean the super rich will be more prolific in these schools.”

The vast majority of independent schools are classed as charities or non-profit making trusts. For-profit schools are not allowed in the UK so funds go towards running and improving schools.

Speaking to people on the doorstep, Guildford ’s Lib Dem candidate Zoe Franklin told the LDRS how a woman in Stoughton made “very careful and conscious spending decisions” to pay for a private school. She said the woman did not have foreign holidays and lived in a modest house to afford private schooling as they were unable to get into the local school of their choice that they felt would best support their child with special needs.

Labour’s policy would exempt private SEND schools Ms Franklin said: “It’s especially hard to hear people who say they feel they have to pay for private education for a child with SEND, because the right support just isn’t there in the state sector.”

Labour first announced this policy in its 2019 manifesto, under Jeremy Corbyn, but was brought back into the news limelight in 2023 by Keir Starmer. Worried parents started a Change.org petition against plans, attracting 145,446 signatures at the time of writing.

Starting in Berkshire, the petition argues parents who currently pay school fees on top of taxes used for school funding will be “adding to the state’s burden rather than opting to relieve it” by choosing an independent school. Critics have argued it is “reasonable” for a service provided by a business, like private schools, to be taxed in the same way as other goods and services. One person commented: “Both are voluntary choices when the state provides a free alternative.”

IPSOS polling, published November 2023, showed the majority of the public (57 per cent) support the Labour party’s proposal., with just under one in five (18 per cent) opposing the policy. Research found that even among 2019 Conservative voters, nearly half (47 per cent) support it, compared to a third (32 per cent) who oppose it.

Speaking on behalf of the party, Labour candidate for Reigate Stuart Brady said: “Introducing VAT on school fees is a tough choice being made against the backdrop of a very difficult economic and fiscal position Labour would inherit from the Tories. Labour wants to drive high and rising standards in all our schools, so that we can break down barriers to opportunity across our country.

“I’ve listened to stories from Reigate Constituents and am aware of the variety of economic and educational positions of those paying privately for education, including parents of children with additional needs. I know that most are not the super-rich. [But] Labour in government will spread opportunity to all parts of the country at every age and every stage.”

First steps for mental health

18 July 2024



The National Health Service (NHS) has introduced “First Steps to Support,” a new service which is designed to help residents aged 18 and over manage their mental health. This comprehensive facility is accessible via telephone, text, and email, offering early intervention and guidance through a single conversation with a dedicated wellbeing advisor.

Whether you’re feeling stressed, irritable, or down, facing financial worries or sleep issues, caring for others with little to no time for yourself – “First Steps to Support” will help you delve and face these issues. They seek to help you improve your mental wellbeing by providing support not only for individuals but also for their friends and family members. The welcoming staff aims to understand what’s troubling you and attempts to explore ways to guide you to the right resources, in order to ease your burdens and help you enjoy life again.

Residents will receive tailored guidance on self-help strategies and have early access to talking therapies. In addition, the service offers referrals to various support services that tackle wider determinants of wellbeing, including financial difficulties, housing issues, employment concerns, isolation, and bereavement. The overarching objective is to enhance long-term wellbeing by connecting residents with local community organisations and support hubs, ensuring sustained assistance and resilience.

Service Availability:

Residents can reach out to the “First Steps to Support” service through the following contact methods:

☎ Telephone: 0333 332 4753

☐ SMS: 07860 026657
☐ Email: dohel.firststeps.surrey@nhs.net

The wellbeing advisors can be contacted during the following hours:

☐ Monday: 8am to 3pm
☐ Tuesday: 9am to 4pm
☐ Wednesday: 10am to 5pm
☐ Thursday: 9am to 7pm
☐ Friday: 10am to 2pm

Further Information

For more information, the NHS encourages residents to visit the “First Steps to Support” webpage on healthysurrey.org.uk

King awards Epsom’s refugee resettler

18 July 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council are very pleased to share that their Community Development Manager **Rachel Kundasamy** has been recognised in the King’s birthday honours this year. Rachel has been awarded a Medal of the British Empire (BEM) for her services to Refugee Resettlement.

Rachel said, “It was lovely to discover I’d been nominated, and I genuinely never expected to receive the award.

“Working to support the refugee community is incredibly rewarding. I’ve been really privileged in meeting and working with some of the refugee community, and their resilience shown in the face of such adversity is nothing short of inspiring.

“It’s a great thing to receive a BEM for a body of work that I feel immensely proud of – and it goes without saying that I wouldn’t have won anything had it not been for the incredible support of the community development team and the housing team at the council. I also want to extend a huge thank you to Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network (EERN), with whom the council has built an incredible partnership over the years. I’m truly grateful to everyone at EERN for the support they have shown the council in helping provide services to those refugees who have settled in Epsom and Ewell.”

Chief Executive **Jackie King** has said “We are all very proud of Rachel for achieving this great honour, which is due to her tireless work in the area of Refugee Resettlement. Rachel designs and delivers innovative projects and strategies that provide the help and support local refugees need to adjust, settle and be able to live fulfilling lives in our borough. I know Rachel is supported by a brilliant team in this work and we are very grateful to them, too.

Our purpose as a council is to make a positive difference to the lives of those in our borough. Through her dedication, passion and partnership working, Rachel has made a huge difference to the lives of many people who are going through extreme hardship and challenge, and this award is testament to that.”