

Boxing champions young people in Epsom & Ewell

17 April 2024



A new local boxing programme, led by **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** and delivered by **Epsom Boxing Academy**, saw its first cohort graduate in March. 14 students, referred by local schools, were enrolled on the course. Graduating students were awarded an England Boxing Bronze Award which was complimented with an AQA Empire Fighting Chance Award in nutrition and health.

The structured boxing programme aimed to help young people build confidence, self-discipline, and resilience as well as improving self-esteem and supporting positive mental health.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said; “I was honoured to attend the graduation of the Epsom & Ewell Community Boxing Scheme.

“Boxing is a fantastic way to keep fit, but it has also been shown to aid in the development of life skills including self-discipline, mental strength and control, and personal responsibility; as well as helping manage feelings of aggression. Boxing also provides invaluable opportunities for students to connect with positive mentors.

“We know that community schemes like this one are a fantastic way to tackle inclusion in sport whilst promoting positive outcomes for young people in our borough. I look forward to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council spearheading more initiatives like this one in the future.”

Joe Harding, Boxing Coach and founder of Epsom Boxing Academy, added; “The scheme was a great chance to create and deliver a programme specifically for our community in Epsom & Ewell.

We saw an unbelievable change in the students over the weeks as they developed and demonstrated boxing techniques, learnt about the human body, and about food labels and nutrition.

Life coaching and mentoring helped students’ progress in terms of their self-confidence, personal discipline, and punctuality. We were able to provide a safe space and an environment for the young people to express themselves. The results were outstanding. We were extremely proud to be part of such a great project.”

The Community Boxing Scheme is part of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s wider strategy to improve the wellbeing of residents through activity; and reduce barriers to sports and leisure participation for those who may not otherwise have access to facilities. It follows on from a successful swimming programme, delivered in partnership with leisure operator and social enterprise GLL and made possible by an award from Sport England funded by the National Lottery.

Image courtesy EEBC

1st generation UCA graduates celebrated

17 April 2024



Two graduates from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Epsom, Surrey have been named in Universities UK’s 100 Faces campaign, celebrating the stories and achievements of first-generation students.

McKenna Marsden and **Troy Hunter** feature in the campaign’s arts and sports talents category alongside Happy Valley star, Amit Shah, the crime writer Sir Ian James Rankin OBE, and BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2022, Beth Mead. All 100 graduates listed by Universities UK were the first in their families to attend university.

“Going to university gave me a lot more independence and taught me new skills, developing my abilities in a subject which was once just a passion,” said McKenna, who is a BA (Hons) Fashion graduate. He was chosen by British Vogue as one of its top 50 emerging designers, showcased his graduate collection at London Fashion Week, and interned at Christopher Kane.

He said: “University gave me stability while allowing me to break into the fashion industry, leading to many big achievements. I don’t think I would have had the success I did without studying at university.”

Originally from Newcastle, McKenna’s working-class background was the main inspiration for his final graduate fashion collection and continues to influence his designs.

“Anything is possible if you believe it and work hard for it no matter how many setbacks you may have, if you believe you can achieve your goals you can,” McKenna added.

Troy, who graduated from UCA in 2013 with a degree in BA (Hons) Film Production, has gone on to write episodes for the hit Netflix show Sex Education and an episode of Eastenders. He was also nominated for Outstanding Breakthrough Creative (Television) at the NAACP Awards.

Troy said: “Studying film production at UCA made a huge difference in my life, it gave me the confidence and determination to continue pursuing a career in the TV and Film industry when people around me were telling me otherwise.”

His success continues in the form of a short film called Mya and his debut play Black Pride, as well as a television adaptation of the same name, with Maia Pictures.

New research commissioned by Universities UK revealed the transformative impact of going to university, with almost three-quarters of first-in-the-family students agreeing their degree gave them the confidence to apply for jobs without feeling like an imposter.

Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said: “There are those who say that too many people go to university. I disagree. These stories tell you why. In this country, you are still twice as likely to go to university if you are from the wealthiest background, compared to the least wealthy. That’s not right.

Surgery delay after hip break led to death

17 April 2024



An elderly woman who tragically died after waiting five days for hip surgery prompted a coroner to raise concerns that a hospital is putting patients at risk of an early death.

Anne Rowland, a care home resident in Oxted, died in East Surrey Hospital after inflammation and infection of the lungs following surgery.

Ms Rowland broke her hip following a collision and fall with another care home resident who was partially sighted on February 27, 2023. She was taken to East Surrey Hospital the same day.

Coroner Anna Crawford found there was “no clinical reason” for the surgery not taking place until five days later on March 3 as the patient was “clinically fit”.

She concluded that outstanding infrastructure repairs and the use of different guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) that the Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust was “placing patients at risk of early death”.

NICE guidelines say that hip surgery should take place on the day of the injury or the day after. Early mobilisation is recommended for hip fracture patients to reduce the risk of complications, including pneumonia.

East Surrey Hospital uses a metric of 48 hours within which to conduct such surgery and does not use the NICE timeframe. Although the hospital has a dedicated operating theatre for trauma patients, on some occasions demand outweighs capacity.

However, the surgery did not take place because “other trauma patients were prioritised ahead of [Mrs Rowland] based upon their relative clinical need”.

Operating theatre capacity at the hospital has on occasion been compromised by infrastructure failings. An entire new surgery unit is being constructed and is anticipated to be completed by 2025 at the latest. The orthopaedic theatres also need new air handling and chillers which is yet to be completed.

The coroner concluded that waiting for her operation “caused” Mrs Rowland to develop dementia and immobility. This “contributed” to her developing aspiration pneumonia following surgery. Mrs Rowland’s condition deteriorated resulting in her death at East Surrey Hospital on March 31, 2023.

Ed Cetti, chief medical officer of Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, said: “We are profoundly sorry for the delay in Mrs Rowland’s hip surgery and offer our deepest sympathies to her family during this difficult time.”

The Trust said that in the months since Mrs Rowland’s death, it has “significantly” reduced delays in hip fracture surgery. In November 2023 59 per cent of operations occurred within 36 hours and 91 per cent within 48 hours.

Mr Cetti added: “We always strive to perform surgeries of this nature as soon as possible and monitor our performance against the 36-hour time window identified by NICE guidance. We also monitor against a 48-hour window to ensure any patients that miss the 36-hour target are not waiting longer than 48 hours.

“Recognising that not all patients are medically well enough for surgery within 36 hours, we are working on improving our performance further and reaching the 80 per cent target by the end of 2024/25.”

Image: Entrance to East Surrey Hospital. Credit Get Surrey

New SEND school blocked by Nimby?

17 April 2024



A group of Surrey parents say they are “devastated” and fear it is back to the drawing board after plans for a ‘much needed’ special needs school will likely be quashed.

Planning permission was approved by Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) in March 2023 for a state-run Betchwood Vale school on the site of the vacant Chalcraft Nursery and garden centre. Around 82% of kids with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have to commute out of the district to go to a specialist school. One mum said she covers 80 miles a day on the school run to access education for two of her children

But a single claimant took it to the High Court to challenge the procedure on the way the decision was made on two grounds: application of the environmental habitat regulations and traffic flow. The court has said the first point is valid and thrown out the second.

Using his delegated authority, the council’s Deputy Chief Executive decided not to defend the legal challenge, asking the court to quash the decision, given the legal costs.

Originally scheduled to open in September 2023, parents say they were thrilled to think there might ‘finally be a school locally’ to cater for their needs.

Elizabeth Marett, mum and campaigner for the school, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that she feels education for disabled children is not being prioritised. She said: “I am disappointed, angry and upset with the local residents who have taken it upon themselves to oppose the schools because they are essentially saying the education of disabled children is unimportant.”

“There are children who need schools, and if this isn’t built, their future is very bleak. Is there any way we can convince these people that what they’re doing is really damaging for the local children of the future? These schools are hard to come by. There are so many children in the county that need to go to this school.” Other parents called it a “bitter blow” to the SEND community.

Elizabeth said some children in her son’s class “have nowhere else to go” as mainstream school is not possible for children with anxiety and complex needs.

Betchwood Vale school is likely to be for high-functioning autistic children, who do not have other learning disabilities, if it goes ahead. It would teach children between seven and 19 years old, providing places for around 60 pupil in its first year and going up to 180 children over a few years.

Currently, more than 100 autistic children who live in Mole Valley and require a specialist place go to school out of their district, meaning they spend a long time every day travelling large distances between home and school.

One mum said she covers 80 miles a day on the school run to access education for two of her children whilst another is transported 22 miles in the opposite direction.

Fighting against the application in the planning meeting (March 2023) was an unofficial group called Ladyegate Road Residents Association Ltd (LRRA). The group, named after a private road near the site, objected to the application because of the adverse impact on traffic flow and approach to Dorking, the negative effect on biodiversity and that no alternative options have been investigated for the site.

Planning documents reveal Surrey County Council (SCC) Highways warned of “minor” impacts to traffic on the A25 junctions as a result of the proposed school. It also added conditions of improving vehicle access on nearby Punchbowl Lane.

Cllr Joanna Slater (Conservative for Leatherhead South) said: “What is also troubling is that this has happened completely behind the scenes. Councillors did not know.”

The council’s Development Management Committee (DMC) meeting on 3 April heard that the team claim they were not informed of the SEND school decision being changed or is likely to change. A spokesperson for MVDC said it is not “unusual practice” for a decision to be taken by a senior officer under delegated authority. They said all local ward members were kept updated in the proceedings.

Cllr Slater added: “At best this is a delay to the SEND school opening. At worst, it will result in the whole project failing as the budget for planning permission has been spent.”

Clare Curran, Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Families at SCC, said: “We are disappointed with Mole Valley’s decision not to defend the judicial review. The proposed Betchwood Vale Academy is critical to achieving Surrey’s ambition that autistic children are educated closer to home.”

SCC have promised to deliver 2,440 permanent additional specialist school places in Surrey between 2019 – 2026 to create capacity for 5,760 planned places by 2030/31.

SCC said it has been advised by the Department of Education of their ongoing commitment to deliver Betchwood Vale Academy in full once a positive planning application has been confirmed.

A Mole Valley spokesperson said: “We are working as quickly as possible to get a decision from the Court. Once that is made, we will reconsult on the planning application and soon after – return the application to the Development Management Committee to make the planning decision.”

It added: “This will allow us to ensure that there is no future potential for legal challenge and that once a new decision is made, if it is to again approve the application, then the delivery of the school can start swiftly.”

The Department of Education has been contacted for comment.

The Ladyegate Road Residents Association is not an official body. The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) tried to contact the group for additional comment but was unable to do so.

Related report:

Surrey to SEND £40m for special schools

Image: Betchwood Vale SEND school plan. From Design and Access statement. Credit: Jestico + Whiles Associates Ltd.

New born enters world by rare EXIT

17 April 2024



A 50 strong team of specialist medics crammed into an operation theatre recently to carry out a globally rare procedure on a newborn baby and save his life.

Little Freddie Verschuereen was delivered at St George’s hospital in South West London using the Ex-utero Intrapartum Treatment (EXIT) procedure which delivers babies who could potentially have serious challenges at birth.

This procedure is used when an unborn child has an obstruction in their airway which means they would be unable to breathe independently once they are removed from the placenta.

Professor Asma Khalil, consultant obstetrician at St George’s, led the entire operation, which involved about 50 medics and other staff in the operating theatre.

She said: “An EXIT procedure involves a large number of healthcare professionals from various backgrounds including an obstetrician, fetal medicine specialist, an anaesthetist, a paediatric anaesthetist, a paediatric ENT surgeon, midwives and the neonatal team, as well as other theatre staff.”

In little Freddie’s case there was a cyst on his tongue that could potentially block his airways it was detected in a scan during his mum’s second trimester. The team made an incision in mum Anna’s tummy and delivered Freddie’s head and shoulders first, leaving him attached to the placenta and able to breathe.

They established an airway so he could breathe independently before delivering the rest of him. Freddie weighed 6lbs 8oz (3.1kg) at birth and was able to go home with his parents Anna and Peter Verschuereen a healthy baby.

Anna said: “We’ve been incredibly impressed with the service we have had at St George’s, at every step it has been outstanding care. When we found out we needed to have the procedure we felt in such safe hands with the experts at St George’s. We never doubted their skill and advice.”

Professor Khalil added: “I am very grateful to the efforts by every member of our large team who ensured that we delivered the best care to Anna and Freddie. Saving babies’ lives and caring for the parents during challenging times is the most rewarding aspect of my job.”

An EXIT procedure is extremely rare. However, despite its global rarity this is the second time it has been carried out in St George’s this year.

Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer for St George’s, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, said: “St George’s is one of the few hospitals in the country that carries out this rare procedure and saves the lives of many babies. I am pleased to hear that Freddie is doing well thanks to our dedicated and skilled teams and everyone at St George’s wishes him and his family all the best for the future.”

£1.1 m boost for Surrey Uni's solar thermal research

17 April 2024



Solar-thermal devices that have the potential to transform how we heat our homes and generate power on a larger scale are being developed by a team led by the University of Surrey. This exciting project has received a £1.1 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

The main goal of this research is to create new designs for surfaces that can selectively absorb sunlight while also efficiently emitting heat in the form of near-infrared radiation. These devices are different from solar cells, which typically convert sunlight into electricity; solar-thermal devices use sunlight to generate heat, which can then be used for driving mechanical engines or converted into electricity.

The research project is led by Surrey, in collaboration with the University of Bristol and Northumbria University and combines their expertise in photonics, advanced materials, applied electromagnetics, and world-class nanofabrication facilities.

Professor Marian Florescu, Principal Investigator from the University of Surrey, said:

“Our project is not just about innovating; it’s about responding to a global necessity. The sun showers us with a tremendous amount of energy every day, far more than we currently capture. By developing these advanced solar-absorbing surfaces, we are opening up new, efficient ways to harness this abundant solar energy. Our goal is to transform how we use sunlight, making it a powerhouse for clean and sustainable energy that meets our growing needs without harming the planet.”

The project has several aims:

- To develop solar absorbers that can work well even at very high temperatures.
- Improve the efficiency of the team’s special solar-absorbing structures. The team plans to build prototype models to demonstrate how well they work.
- To better understand and ultimately improve how these devices handle and perform with the heat they generate from sunlight.

Professor Marin Cryan, Co-Principal Investigator from the University of Bristol, said:

“The University of Bristol has been developing thermionic solar cell technology for a number of years. These use concentrated sunlight to heat materials to the point where thermionic emission of electrons occurs, which can form the basis of high-efficiency, low-cost solar cells. This exciting project will develop very efficient solar selective absorbers, which will be an important component of the overall cell design.”

Dr Daniel Ho, Co-Principal Investigator from Northumbria University, said:

“Northumbria University is at the forefront of thermophotovoltaic research, utilising a specialised microscope heating stage alongside an in-house built Fourier imaging spectroscopy system. This advanced thermal analysis technique enables comprehensive and angle-resolved scattering analysis across both visible and infrared spectrums, even under vacuum conditions and at temperatures as high as 1000°C.

“We are excited to work with our partners to help achieve pioneering developments in renewable energy research.”

Virtual care to rise under ambulance plan

17 April 2024



Over a third of South East Coast Ambulance (SECAmb) service responses will be done remotely in a new five-year strategy. (Here “remotely” means by video call or telephone rather than sending out an ambulance.)

The NHS Trust said its care model is no longer “fit for purpose” as it prepares for a 15 per cent increase in patient demand over the next five years, at a board meeting last week (April 4). Increasing demands on the service included health care becoming more complex, the ageing population and changing areas of deprivation.

By 2029, the Trust aims that over a third of all its patients will be signposted to another service- leaving 65 per cent of patients with an ambulance response. The change will affect Surrey, Thames Valley, Kent and Medway as well as Sussex Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

Simon Weldon, CEO, reassured that SECAmb would still be there to protect and look after the sick who needed an ambulance. He added: “If patients don’t need an ambulance, we can help you get you to a place which can meet your healthcare needs.”

Urgent medical needs such as cardiac arrest, a stroke, heart attack, pneumonia, childbirth and newborn care would still be attended to by ambulances, the Trust said.

Delivering this strategy, over the next three years, SECAmb expects it to meet emergency care needs within the national standards of 7 minutes for calls for immediate life-threatening and time-critical injuries and illnesses; and 18 minutes for emergency calls.

For non-emergency patients, virtual care will be provided via an assessment by a remote senior clinician. Meeting documents said this would enable patients to be “cared for directly or referred to the most appropriate care provider”.

Investing in a data and digital strategy was highlighted as a key part of the new direction. The board heard how new technology like AI would help the SECAmb make better decisions and lead virtual consultations. These could be used to respond to patient needs in a remote and professional setting rather than sending an ambulance.

Meeting documents revealed that 88 per cent of patients received an ambulance response; but an SECamb officer said the outcomes from the cases indicated only 30.5 per cent of patients needed clinical care.

Only 12 per cent of patients are currently referred or signposted to another service rather than receiving ambulance care; but under the new strategy for 2029, this will increase to 35 per cent.

Team Member for SEAmb, Matt Dechaine, said: “Sending a fully kitted ambulance is a very expensive way for the public purse to respond to patient needs, when other services may be able to address it in a cost-effective way.”

Covering five years, the new strategy will be carried out in three phases: designing new models of care, collaborating with partners and developing a digital strategy; implementing the change and finalising and improving the operational model. Digitalisation of the service will begin in phase 2, with electronic health records deployed by March 2025.

SEAamb identified its model as “unsustainable when challenged” from an operational, workforce and financial perspective. The Trust found it would need to employ 600 more people over the next five years to respond to demand.

Not all non-emergency patient consultations will be resolved solely over the telephone. Simon told the board that the strategy aims to “align patient needs with ambulance services”.

Over 2,000 staff, 400 volunteers and 350 members of the public have been consulted on the strategy, with the Trust saying it has been “clinically led”. System partners have also been invited to 20 sessions to share their views.

The full new SECamb strategy is set to be published in May 2024.

Call staff at South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust. Credit: SECamb

Psychiatric bed shortages in Surrey

17 April 2024



A man tragically took his own life in Surrey after a mental health relapse, prompting a coroner to warn of a shortage of psychiatric beds in Surrey hospitals.

Jonathan Harris, 52, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, died by suicide on June 27, 2022.

If an inpatient psychiatric hospital bed had been available just days earlier, Jonathan would not have died, the coroner ruled. Coroner Anna Crawford judged that action should be taken to prevent future deaths.

Bed shortages for mental health patients in Surrey, as well as nationwide, has been an ongoing issue for NHS Trusts. Many patients are forced to move up to 60 miles away from home to receive treatment because there are few beds in their area. The court heard that this is in the context of a national shortage of suitably qualified psychiatrists.

Following a lengthy psychiatric inpatient stay in Camberley in November 2021, Jonathan was under the care of Surrey Heath Community Mental Health Recovery Service, which is part of Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Jonathan was prescribed anti-psychotic medication. In February and May 2022, Jonathan requested for his medication to be reduced to fortnightly and then once every three weeks.

The reduction in medication in May 2022 was judged as “premature” by the coroner. Jonathan had reportedly shown signs of appearing “suspicious” when he was seen by the Surrey Heath Mental Health Team (MHT) on May 4. However, these signs were not explored.

The mental health team were also aware Mr Harris was moving house, meaning and move to a new community mental health team, which may affect his wellbeing.

Jonathan’s mental health continued to deteriorate and on June 24 it the MHT decided that he required an assessment under the Mental Health Act.

No inpatient bed was available and therefore the assessment did not take place. If Jonathan had been assessed, he would have been detained under the Mental Health Act and admitted to hospital.

The coroner said: “Mr Harris would not have taken his own life had he remained well and the relapse of his paranoid schizophrenia materially contributed to his death.

“Mr Harris would not have died had an inpatient psychiatric hospital bed been available on either 24, 25 or 26 June 2022.

“The court also heard that there is an ongoing shortage of available inpatient psychiatric beds in Surrey and that this is in the context of a national shortage of inpatient psychiatric beds. The court is concerned that both of these matters present a risk of future deaths.”

The Prevention of Future Deaths report was issued to NHS England rather than to Surrey and Borders Partnership. NHS England was invited to comment; it said it is working to the coroner’s deadline of 56 days to respond with the action it will take or proposed to take, and such information is not yet available.

Related reports:

Coroner catalogues care failures in diabetic death

Better private – public health communications could prevent deaths

Cancer patient getting the right royal treatment

17 April 2024



The first cancer patient set to undergo a revolutionary new procedure that could cut treatment time to almost a quarter said it was a “ privilege” to be given the opportunity.

The **Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust** is taking part in a new clinical trial led by the **Royal Marsden** into prostate cancer. Currently, patients are treated with radiotherapy over a minimum of 20 treatments which lasts four weeks or more. Under this new process, that time could be reduced to one and a half weeks.

Michael Robson, 78, is the first patient to be part of the trial in Royal Surrey. He was diagnosed in December 2023. He said: “One of my friends was diagnosed with prostate cancer and he said I should get a test so I had a blood test and I was called by my GP and sent for an appointment at urology. I was fortunate enough to meet Dr Philip Turner who gave me the options and went through everything. Everything has been explained to me in a way that is easy to understand and made the journey so much easier to deal with. All of the staff I couldn’t complement them highly enough. They have been fantastic.”

Michael was given options for treatment and was asked if he was interested in taking part in the clinical trial and he agreed straight away. He added: “It’s been fantastic here. I feel very privileged to be the first patient. The service has been first class from everybody concerned.”

Patients with low and intermediate risk disease who took part in a trial called PACE-B demonstrated that the process would work in the tighter time frames. This new study is to determine whether those considered high-risk would get the same benefits. The trial, called PACE-NODES, was opened at The Royal Marsden and was designed jointly by investigators from Queen’s University Belfast and The Institute of Cancer Research, London.

Dr Philip Turner, consultant clinical oncologist and principal investigator for the trial, said: “We are delighted to be opening the PACE NODES trial in Royal Surrey. This is part of our drive to give Surrey patients access to the very best oncology clinical trials from across the UK and indeed from across the world.

“The benefits with regard to timing are enormous – the standard of care for these men is a minimum of four weeks of daily visits which is very disruptive to life. The rates of side effects are low. Crucially, the five fraction treatment appears just as safe as conventional 20 fraction treatments which we have been using for years very safely.”

Chief executive Louise Stead said: “Royal Surrey has a long and proud tradition of being a premier centre of UK oncology research and we are determined, with the support of our patients and other partners, to ensure as many patients as possible have access to ground-breaking research close to home. If successful, this could make a huge difference to patients receiving treatment for prostate cancer.”

L-R: Radiographer Kate Maltby, Michael Robson, Dr Philip Turner

Epsom squash team stand the squeeze

17 April 2024



When five girls from **Rosebery School, Epsom** formed the school’s first ever squash team just six months ago with a view to entering the England Squash National Schools Championships 2023/24, little did they know how far they would go in this tough and prestigious tournament. Being a state school with no on-site squash facilities, they knew they would be competing against a lot of private schools around the country, many with their own squash courts and dedicated coaches. They were, however, all keen squash players and junior members of **Ebbisham Sports Club** in Epsom where they trained on a regular basis.

By dint of their considerable success in Stages 1 and 2 of the Championships, held respectively at Limpsfield Club in November 2023 and **Epsom College** in January 2024, the Rosebery School Girls Squash Team were delighted to learn that they had done enough to qualify for the Finals held in Birmingham on 14th March. One of the top eight teams from around the country to reach the Finals, the Rosebery Squash Team battled hard through three very tough matches during the course of a long day, with some excellent individual match wins and some very close losses. Whilst they came extremely close to beating one of the other schools, in the end the Rosebery team had to settle for final place, but did so with a smile on their faces and knowing they had given the Championships their all.

Gillian Mead