

Epsom author shares personal epilepsy journey amid town's historic link to the condition

7 March 2026



An Epsom author has published a deeply personal account of living with epilepsy, adding a modern voice to a local story that stretches back more than a century.

Madeline Bolton-Smith, who lives in Epsom and works as a probate assistant at a family-run accountancy firm in nearby Fetcham, has written *Diary of an Epileptic*, a book describing her experience of diagnosis, treatment and life with the neurological condition.

Epilepsy affects around one in every hundred people in the UK, yet many newly diagnosed patients still feel isolated when confronting the condition for the first time. Bolton-Smith says her motivation for writing the book was to provide reassurance and solidarity to others navigating similar uncertainty.

"When I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I often felt very alone," she explains. "Writing the book was my way of saying to others in that position that their feelings are valid and that they are not facing it on their own."

Her account follows the realities of living with epilepsy from the moment of diagnosis through investigative medical procedures, struggles to secure treatment funding and undergoing Laser Interstitial Thermal Therapy (LITT) surgery. When the surgery did not bring the hoped-for outcome, she had to confront the challenge of adapting to life with epilepsy once again.

The book reflects openly on the emotional impact of the condition – fear, frustration and isolation – but also the resilience required to continue forward. Bolton-Smith hopes the honesty of her story will help readers and families dealing with epilepsy feel less alone.

Epsom's historical link to epilepsy

Bolton-Smith's story also resonates with a significant but little-known chapter of local history.

In the early twentieth century Epsom was home to the **Ewell Epileptic Colony**, later known as St Ebba's Hospital. Established during a period when epilepsy was poorly understood and widely feared, the colony reflected the prevailing belief that people with the condition should live apart from mainstream society.

Opened in 1903, the colony formed part of the wider Horton Estate of hospitals built by the London County Council to treat mental illness and neurological disorders. Hundreds of patients with epilepsy lived and worked there in what was intended to be a self-contained rural community.

Residents grew food, maintained workshops and followed strict daily routines designed to create stability for those prone to seizures. While some patients experienced relative independence compared with traditional asylum conditions, the colony nevertheless represented an era when epilepsy carried heavy stigma and separation from ordinary life was seen as necessary.

The institution eventually became St Ebba's Hospital and continued operating for decades before closing in the late twentieth century as attitudes and treatments changed.



Remembering the patients buried in Horton Cemetery

The lives of many former residents of the Horton hospitals, including St Ebba's, are remembered today through the work of the **Friends of Horton Cemetery**. The charity seeks to restore this historic Epsom cemetery, the largest asylum cemetery in Europe, to community ownership and researches the lives of those buried there.

More than 9,000 patients from the surrounding hospitals were laid to rest in the cemetery, many with little recognition during their lifetimes. The charity's website, hortoncemetery.org, shares their stories.

The contrast between that earlier era and the present day illustrates how far attitudes toward epilepsy have progressed. Modern medicine emphasises treatment, independence and inclusion rather than segregation.

[CLICK here](#) for the story of Matilda DUNKINSON

Changing understanding of epilepsy

Medical knowledge of epilepsy has advanced dramatically over the past century. Once widely misunderstood and surrounded by superstition, epilepsy is now recognised as a neurological condition caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

Treatments today range from anti-seizure medications to specialised surgical procedures such as the LITT therapy Bolton-Smith underwent. Support networks, advocacy groups and greater public awareness have also helped reduce stigma.

Yet challenges remain, particularly for those newly diagnosed. Bolton-Smith believes that sharing lived experiences can play a vital role in helping others understand the realities of the condition.

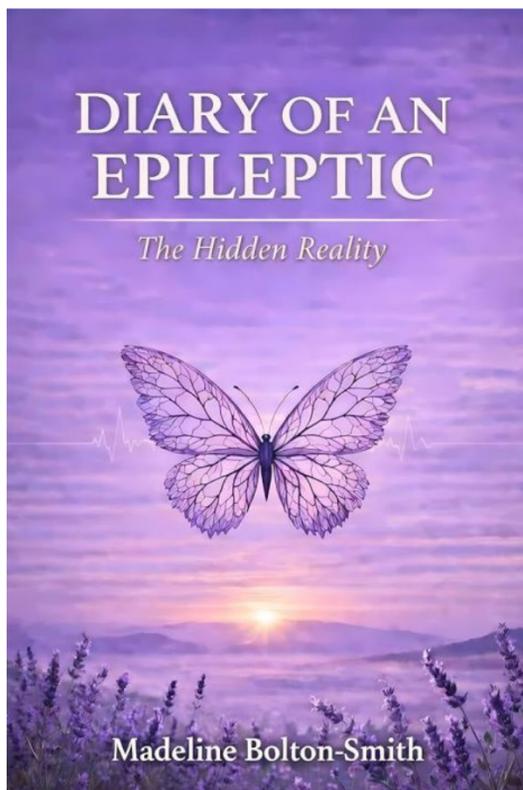
Through *Diary of an Epileptic*, she hopes to contribute to that wider conversation while offering practical reassurance to readers facing similar circumstances.

Diary of an Epileptic: The Hidden Reality is available online.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Photo: The author on Epsom Common



Last round of developers' funds in Epsom and Ewell to be spent

7 March 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is inviting local community groups and organisations to apply for funds, raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to deliver projects that benefit residents and support new development across the borough.

Bid applications will open on Monday 9 March 2026 and close on Sunday 17 May 2026.

This will be the final time that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will run this funding process. From April 2027, the council will be dissolved and replaced by the new East Surrey Council, which will be responsible for delivering local infrastructure projects across the geographic areas of Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

When new development takes place, it can place extra pressure on local services and facilities. The Community Infrastructure Levy enables councils to raise funds from development to be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of local infrastructure—the levy is intended to give councils more choice and flexibility in how they fund the infrastructure required to support local growth.

Last year, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council allocated over ?230,000 from the 2024/2025 Neighbourhood CIL Fund for community infrastructure projects, including:

- a permanent secure storage shed for The Library of Things enabling residents to borrow useful household items
- energy-efficient lighting installed in a pedestrian tunnel for the Cattle Arch/Under-Rail Tunnel project
- a Road Safety Outside School Scheme implemented at Linden Bridge School improving pedestrian accessibility, a safety crossing for children on Grafton Road and traffic flow aids.

Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) , Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee said: “This Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding is a real opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting difference in our community. As this will be the last chance to apply through Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, we strongly encourage local community groups and organisations to put forward ideas that could benefit their neighbourhoods.

“We’re proud that the Neighbourhood CIL funding has already helped deliver a wide range of successful local projects - from the recently installed 3G football pitch at Glynn School, to secure specialist bike storage for Wheels for Epsom, the

regeneration of disused grounds at the Horton Arts Centre, and the water fountains installed at various locations across the borough. These achievements show just how powerful this funding can be when community ambition and local investment come together.

“As the council launches its final tranche of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding, we want to ensure that money raised from new development continues to support projects that strengthen our community and improve the quality of life for residents across the borough for years to come.”

Application process

The bidding process is designed to be as clear as possible and the application form — available to download from the council’s website, with hard copies at Epsom Town Hall, Bourne Hall and Epsom Playhouse — aims to help make the process simpler. Neighbourhood CIL Funding | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Bids will be shortlisted using the criteria set out in section C of the CIL Spending Protocol (adopted March 2025). More information on the process and prioritisation criteria can be found in section 5 of the CIL Spending Protocol.

To receive funding, all CIL spending applications must be for infrastructure. All bids that pass stage 1 of the assessment process will be examined by the CIL Member Working Group, who will make recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.

It is important for each application to be completed in full. The CIL Spending Protocol (adopted March 2025) needs to be read alongside the application form.

Any questions about the application form or process can be emailed to: CIL@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk.

About the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows councils to raise funds from new developments for infrastructure projects which help to mitigate the impacts of new development. Of the total collected:
 - 80% goes towards strategic borough-wide infrastructure - examples include highway schemes, permanent school expansions, hospitals, and other health and social care facilities
 - 15% is allocated for local projects (neighbourhood CIL) a portion of the CIL is to be spent on local projects in accordance with the CIL regulations and aligns with the Corporate Plan - examples include sport pitches, courts upgrades, public realm improvements and community gardens
 - 5% for the day-to-day costs of administering CIL.
- The Epsom & Ewell Borough Council CIL Spending Protocol was approved by the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee on 11 March 2025.
- The CIL Spending Protocol sets out the Epsom and Ewell Borough specific protocol governing the process and criteria for selecting infrastructure projects for funding through CIL. When completing a CIL bid form please read the CIL Spending Protocol alongside, as this sets out the guidance and criteria required for your Neighbourhood CIL bid application.
- More information about the Neighbourhood CIL Fund can be found here: <https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/Neighbourhood-CIL>

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council



Epsom and Ewell February crime and safety round-up

7 March 2026



Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as part of a trial we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety developments affecting the borough, drawing on information released by Surrey Police and local authorities.

Police operation in West Ewell results in three arrests

A police operation targeting antisocial behaviour and suspected drug activity in **West Ewell** led to **three arrests** during February.

Officers from the **Epsom & Ewell Safer Neighbourhood Team**, supported by the East Surrey Neighbourhood Enforcement Team and Special Constabulary, carried out patrols around the **Watersedge estate**. During the evening operation officers conducted **11 stop-searches and two vehicle stops**, while gathering intelligence relating to drug use, drug dealing and antisocial behaviour in the area.

Police said the activity formed part of ongoing efforts to disrupt criminal activity in neighbourhood “hotspot” locations.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood updates)

Missing Epsom man located safe and well

Surrey Police issued an appeal during February to help locate **Lee, a 63-year-old man reported missing from Epsom**.

Police later confirmed that he had been **found safe**, allowing the appeal to be cancelled.

(Source: Surrey Police)

Prolific thief targeting local businesses identified

Surrey Police also reported action against a **prolific offender who targeted businesses across Epsom and neighbouring areas**, including Sutton, Wallington, Cheam and Burgh Heath.

Police said the offender entered several premises and stole items including mobile phones during incidents affecting local traders.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood update)

Safer Epsom & Ewell programme continues

The **Safer Epsom & Ewell** programme — a joint initiative between Surrey Police, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and partner agencies — continued to develop during February.

The scheme focuses on areas including **Epsom town centre, Watersedge and Longmead**, using the Home Office “**Clear, Hold, Build**” approach to tackle organised crime, drug supply, acquisitive crime and antisocial behaviour. (democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

The programme combines targeted police enforcement with longer-term work involving the council and community partners to address underlying causes of crime.

(Source: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council / Surrey Police)

Crime trends in the borough

Police data for the area indicates that the **most commonly reported offences locally include violence and sexual offences, shoplifting, criminal damage and vehicle crime**. (surrey.police.uk)

Retail crime and antisocial vehicle use remain key policing priorities, with neighbourhood teams carrying out targeted patrols and working with businesses and community groups to address concerns.

(Source: Surrey Police neighbourhood statistics)

Community engagement and policing events

Neighbourhood officers continued their “**Meet the Beat**” programme during February, providing opportunities for residents to speak directly with police about local issues.

Sessions were held at locations including **Epsom Library at the Ebbisham Centre**, where residents were invited to raise concerns about crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety.

(Source: Surrey Police)

How to contact Surrey Police

- **Emergency (crime in progress or immediate danger): call 999**
- **Non-emergency police matters: call 101**
- **Online reporting and advice:** <https://www.surrey.police.uk/contact/>

▪ **Crimestoppers (anonymous information): 0800 555 111**

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity or information that may assist police investigations.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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January crime and safety round-up

Surrey Space Institute could lead UK missions to the stars

7 March 2026



UK-led and UK-enabled space missions within this decade should be the hard-coded goal of the country's space industry at every level, says the Director of the newly launched Surrey Space Institute at the University of Surrey.

Professor Adam Amara, who is also on secondment to the UK Space Agency as Chief Scientist, is calling on the sector and government partners to "stop outsourcing ambition and have belief and pride in our capabilities to operate missions on a regular basis".

Professor Amara said:

"There is a real opportunity for 'middle powers', as Mark Carney put it, to partner together and compete with the established global superpowers. But this does not mean the UK space industry or the UK public should water down its ambition for what we could accomplish. It is in our gift to establish regular UK-led and operated missions."

"Mega-constellations, mega-primers, mega-states - these are the gravitational forces we feel in the world today. But the extraordinary capabilities held by the UK and our allies can be mobilised, as an antidote to the inertia of giants. The Surrey Space Institute will be a focal point for convening the technologies, the researchers and the companies that will prevent middle-power ambitions being limited by fragmentation. This must become a sectoral, a national and a collaborative commitment to contribute to the promise of space."

The Surrey Space Institute was set up precisely to help deliver that commitment. A key focus will be to help the UK grow the skills and capabilities in today's workforce and for future generations. The Institute will also work with its partners to conceive and operate space missions - combining hardware, software, policy and operations to tackle problems on this planet as well as in deep space. Its research will focus on three areas: managing water and climate on Earth, strengthening space systems such as satellite communications and cybersecurity, and developing the engineering, physiological, legal and economic governance solutions needed to deliver deep space exploration, operation and even settlement.

The UK space sector has a proud heritage - and Surrey has been at the heart of it, helping to drive the small satellite revolution that proved space could be accessible, not just the preserve of superpowers. The Surrey Space Institute will take that further - forging industry partnerships, opening up space sector facilities to small businesses, and equipping the next generation with mission-ready skills through hands-on research opportunities and specialist Continuing Professional Development programmes.

Surrey University



Image: Prof Amara (Surrey Uni) against imagined background of a rocket into space from UK

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Surrey's big brains on tiny matters recognised

7 March 2026



Surrey ranked world's leading university for nuclear isomer discovery, with three physicists in global top ten

A global database of nuclear physics discoveries spanning more than a century has ranked three University of Surrey physicists among the world's top 10 for discovering and characterising nuclear isomers - rare, long-lived excited states of atomic nuclei that provide a unique window into the structure of matter and underpin modern medical imaging.

(From left to right: Professors Philip Walker, Zsolt Podolyák and Patrick Regan.)

Professors Zsolt Podolyák, Philip Walker and Patrick Regan - ranked second, third and tenth respectively in a global list of more than 1,000 researchers - are the highest-ranking university-based academics. Their work has helped position Surrey as the world's leading university for nuclear isomer discovery, an exceptional distinction in a field typically dominated by large national laboratories.

Nuclear isomers occur when protons and neutrons inside an atomic nucleus rearrange into higher-energy configurations that live far longer than typical excited nuclear states, which usually last much less than a microsecond. Some isomers survive for microseconds, years, or in extreme cases, far longer than the age of the universe.

Alongside helping scientists understand how elements are formed in stellar explosions and neutron-star mergers - and how they decay to create the matter around us - isomers are most widely used in medicine. The world's most common diagnostic imaging isotope, Technetium-99m, used in around 20 million diagnostic procedures each year, is itself an isomer, and the same techniques used to study these states allow for accurate cancer diagnosis and safe radiation dosing.

The rankings come from a new international database compiled by Professor Michael Thoennessen of Michigan State University and published in Nuclear Physics News International. The findings will be presented at the NUSTAR Annual Meeting in Germany from 23-27 February.

Zsolt Podolyák, Professor at Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics, said:

"Discovering and characterising nuclear isomers is technically extremely challenging. These states are rare and often hidden within enormous amounts of background data. What this recognition shows is the sustained strength of Surrey's nuclear physics research and our ability to lead major experiments at the world's most advanced accelerator facilities."

The discoveries were carried out at major international accelerator laboratories, including the GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research in Darmstadt, Germany, a leading hub for nuclear structure research. While the new ranking database has named GSI the world's leading laboratory for isomer discoveries, Surrey is ranked number one in isomers discovered by external users.

Patrick Regan, NPL Professor of Nuclear Metrology at the University of Surrey, said:

"Research into nuclear isomers helps us address some of the most fundamental questions in science - including where we come from and how the atoms that make up our bodies were formed in stellar explosions. To have three researchers from one university ranked in the global top 10 is highly unusual and reflects decades of sustained leadership in a very demanding field."

Professor Philip Walker, Emeritus Professor of Physics at the University of Surrey, who has previously been awarded the Institute of Physics' Rutherford Medal and the European Physical Society's Lise Meitner Prize for his contributions to nuclear structure physics, said:

"Nuclear isomers have played a central role in shaping our understanding of atomic nuclei since their discovery in 1921. They provide some of the most sensitive tests of how protons and neutrons arrange themselves inside the nucleus and have repeatedly challenged and refined our theoretical models. I am honoured to be counted among the world's leading researchers in this field."

The NUSTAR (Nuclear Structure, Astrophysics and Reactions) Annual Meeting forms part of the FAIR (Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research) accelerator facility at the GSI site in Darmstadt, bringing together around 800 nuclear physicists worldwide. Surrey Professor Zolt Podolyák serves as spokesperson for the international NUSTAR collaboration, helping to guide its scientific direction and coordinate research at one of the world's most advanced accelerator facilities.

Photo: *From left to right: Professors Philip Walker, Zolt Podolyák and Patrick Regan*

Surrey University

Surrey's declining birth rate means fewer school classes

7 March 2026



Surrey's falling birth rate has led to nearly 50 fewer classes of school children in less than a decade. That is according to a new strategy report aimed at protecting the future of local schools.

Cabinet members agreed to publish an updated Sustainability Strategy for Schools on February 24. The strategy sets out how Surrey County Council will work with headteachers, academy trusts and dioceses to respond to declining pupil rolls and growing financial pressure.

The figures behind the decision are sobering. Births in Surrey have dropped by 21 per cent since 2012, from 14,237 to 11,244 in 2024. Reception numbers have fallen by 11 per cent since 2016, equivalent to around 47 classes across the county.

Presenting the report, Cllr Helyn Clack, cabinet member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said schools remain "at the heart of our communities" but are facing significant strain from lower birth rates, shifting parental preference for schools and tighter budgets.

"These pressures affect schools of every size and type," members were told. "Many leaders and governing bodies are having to make difficult decisions to sustain high-quality provision."

Schools are funded largely on a per-pupil basis, meaning fewer children directly translates into less money. While some parts of Surrey, particularly areas with new housing, are still seeing demand for places, others are experiencing sharp falls in numbers.

The county council leader, Tim Oliver, described the statistics as "quite stark", pointing out that although Surrey saw families move in during and after the pandemic, the longer-term birth rate decline mirrors the national picture.

Councillors agreed the cost-of-living poses a challenge to the county as it can be quite difficult for families to afford to move to Surrey. On the other hand, Surrey hosts a lot of private schools which are very popular so there is less overall demand for state schools.

Cllr Sinead Mooney warned that decisions about school organisation are among the most sensitive the council makes. "This isn't about a strategy document," she said. "It's about people's local school, their children, and often the heart of their community."

Cllr Mooney urged the council to ensure there is proper engagement with communities at an early stage as "too often there is a perception that options are being shaped before the conversation begins". She said: "Once a school is lost, the impact is often lasting and irreversible."

Cabinet members stressed that closures would only ever be considered as a last resort. Other options the council would explore included partnerships, shared leadership models, federations or reducing admission numbers

Particular concern was raised about small village schools, with councillors urging that decisions must not be driven "solely by financial metrics" but by a full understanding of community impact.

Cllr Clack raised concerns about a local village school in her area: "What was a thriving village school down to 13 pupils and is no longer finding it easier to maintain themselves." She added: "We have to understand that schools are paid per pupil, and if they don't have pupils in their schools then they don't get the funding."

The updated strategy commits the council to early engagement, transparent sharing of data and closer collaboration with schools and trusts. Officers will prioritise maintained schools considered most at risk and work with leaders on tailored solutions.

The council also acknowledged the wider context, including ongoing SEND pressures and looming local government reorganisation, which could reshape Surrey's governance structure in coming years.

Despite the challenges, members emphasised their support for maintaining a broad and varied school offer across urban, suburban and rural areas. The cabinet unanimously endorsed the updated strategy and approved its publication.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Image - entirely imagined.

Epsom and St Helier Trust doctor appointed by Privy Council to GMC

7 March 2026



The General Medical Council (GMC) has announced a paediatrician as the latest member of its governing body, the GMC Council. Dr Lucinda Etheridge, a consultant in general and adolescent paediatrics, is the latest registrant member to join the body. She joins from St George's Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group in Surrey, where she is Site Chief Medical Officer. Her appointment replaces Dr Alison Wright on the Council, who stepped down after being elected as President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

The Council's primary role is to protect the public by setting the GMC's strategy and goals and overseeing the work of the regulator. It is led by GMC Chair, Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen, and comprises up to six lay members and six registrant members. Following her appointment by the Privy Council, Dr Etheridge will start her role on Tuesday, 3 March. She has worked with the GMC since 2007, initially in the development of fitness to practise assessments, then as a performance assessor and training others for that role, before becoming a Responsible Officer for an acute trust.

Dr Etheridge, whose clinical interests are in the management of eating disorders, will step down from her current medical director role in spring 2026. She will then combine her work at the GMC alongside three days of clinical practice each week.

Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen said: "I'm delighted to welcome Dr Etheridge to the Council. She brings a wealth of experience to support us in our role overseeing the GMC and supporting registrants to deliver the best possible care. Dr Etheridge joins at an important time as we continue our work to be a more compassionate and effective regulator, and ahead of vital reform to the regulation of UK healthcare professionals. I would also like to thank Dr Alison Wright for her work and her contributions to Council. On behalf of the GMC, I wish her the very best in her new role."

Dr Etheridge said: "I am delighted to be joining the GMC Council as a registrant member. I look forward to working collaboratively across the four nations to help shape a fair, transparent and forward-looking regulatory environment that enables registrants to provide the highest standards of care for patients."

GMC Council members work a minimum of three days each month with the regulator. More information about the Council is on the GMC website.

The GMC Press Office

Epsom and Ewell's four year commitment to Ukraine

7 March 2026



4 Years of War in Ukraine, 4 Years of Heart Ache, Support and Immense Pride in this Community

By Roy Deadman, Chairman and Co-Founder, Surrey Stands With Ukraine

Four years ago, we woke to news that changed Europe overnight. Ukraine had been invaded. I remember sitting in shock, watching the images unfold, feeling an overwhelming mix of disbelief and anger. I was incredibly angry that Russia had invaded Ukraine. What mattered to me in that moment was not politics, but people. A proud European nation was under attack, and I wanted to do all I could to defend it.

On day one of the war, I called my Ukrainian friend Natalia Irvine, who lives here in Epsom. I asked her a simple question: "What do you need?" I made her a promise that I would support her and her country in any way I could, for as long as it took. At that point, I thought in terms of weeks, perhaps months. I could never have imagined we would still be here four years later.

Together, Natalia and I reached out to our local community. We asked for help and the response was overwhelming. Donations flooded in almost immediately. People wanted to stand with Ukraine. They wanted to do something tangible in the face of such horror.

Within hours, it became clear that we needed space. The generosity of the Ashley Centre was extraordinary. On day one, they offered us 6,000 square feet of retail space. Even though it was rent-free, I had to take a personal risk and sign a lease that made me liable for the business rates, as we were not yet a registered charity. It was a leap of faith, but it was the start of what we proudly called "The Hub."

By the end of that first week, 180 volunteers had registered with us. We had raised close to £20,000 and sent two truckloads of humanitarian aid, donated by this incredible community. It was breathtaking how quickly everything moved.

Those early days were intense. Some people spent up to 20 hours at a time sorting and packing boxes. We worked through exhaustion fuelled by tea, determination and a shared sense of purpose. The emotional rollercoaster was constant, heartbreak at what we were seeing unfold in Ukraine, and immense pride at how Epsom and Ewell pulled together.

We quickly realised this could not be chaotic goodwill alone. We had to run it like a small business operation. Every item had to be sorted, categorised, packed and properly manifested before being loaded onto whichever truck was available. Transport offers poured in, with drivers volunteering to take aid directly into Ukraine. It was inspiring, and it required careful coordination.

In that first week, we formed a core team. Some volunteers stepped forward to create a committee to help make difficult decisions about what we could send and where it should go. These were not easy choices. Demand was enormous, and resources, though generous, were not infinite.

Natalia, based here in Epsom, worked tirelessly alongside us. Her sister Anya, coordinating from inside Ukraine, helped guide where our aid would have the greatest impact. Between Epsom and Ukraine, somehow, we made it work. It was teamwork across borders, built on trust and shared determination.

Very quickly, we understood that we needed to become part of a registered charity. One reason was practical, the burden of business rates. The other was credibility, and the invaluable ability to claim Gift Aid on donations. I was introduced to Lionel Blackman, who ran a charity called Harrop HR Missions. After a coffee and a conversation about our mission, Lionel generously agreed to let us operate under his charity's structure.

From there, Surrey Stands With Ukraine became the fully formed charity we know today: Surrey Stands With Ukraine. As we reach the four-year mark, we have shipped £5 million worth of aid. We have sent 153 trucks, a fire engine, over 50,000 mobility aids and 650 winter family survival packs, and so much more besides.

Today, our charity is based at Global House, where we share space with the totally amazing Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network. EERN provides local support for Ukrainian families who have made Epsom and Ewell their temporary home. It has been a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated team and to witness their daily commitment.

One unexpected gift from these four years has been friendship. What began as an emergency response has grown into a powerful community bond. I have made lifelong friends through this work. We meet for quiz nights, coffee mornings, beers, lunches and parties. That human connection is not a side note, it is central to our resilience.

This work is emotionally hard. While we do not face the same unimaginable horror that Ukrainians endure, we are closer to it than most. We receive constant requests for help. We watch videos from the ground. We hear heartbreaking stories of families torn apart. We cry. We carry it with us.

That friendship network sustains us. There is always someone ready with a hug, someone to make you smile, someone to pick you up when you are exhausted. This is what being part of this charity and this community truly means.

Every single one of us is a volunteer. No one is paid a wage. We are there because we care deeply and because we want to do something meaningful on behalf of the Ukrainian people. That purity of purpose has shaped everything we do.

Over these four years, I have learned so much about Ukraine and its people. The obvious lesson is their extraordinary courage. But that courage is not confined to the front lines. It runs through all Ukrainians, young and old, men and women. Their commitment to preserving their culture, history and identity in the face of attempts to erase it is profoundly inspiring.

When I made that promise on day one, I thought this would be short term. I do believe Western governments have not done enough, or not quickly enough. This is a war in Europe, on our doorstep. History teaches us hard lessons, yet we so often seem slow to act.

If we are not careful, we may look back five or ten years from now at a Europe that has changed for the worse. It feels at times as though we have moved from a post-war world into a pre-war one. The longer this conflict continues without

decisive resolution, the more lives are lost.

And yet, despite the geopolitical uncertainty, I find hope here at home. I find it in every donated sleeping bag, every cheque written, every volunteer shift completed. I find it in schoolchildren raising funds and pensioners knitting winter hats.

When people come together with kindness in their hearts, extraordinary things can happen. A community can unite behind people from another country simply because it is the right thing to do. That gives me hope.

I am immensely proud of what Epsom and Ewell has done over these four years. Proud to live here. Proud to raise my family here. Proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with all of you.

Four years of war. Four years of heartbreak. Four years of unwavering support. And four years of immense pride in this remarkable community.

Roy Deadman - Chair Surrey Stands With Ukraine

There will be a commemoration today at 5pm in The Ashley Centre, marking the 4th anniversary of the war and the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr Robert Leach will be in attendance. All are welcome.

Image: Roy Deadman with SSWU's latest appeal for negative pressure wound dressings

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["Imagine this house is in Epsom" says our man in Ukraine.](#)

Epsom and Ewell pledges to end poverty

7 March 2026



Following the 2024 lead of Surrey County Council, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council also has formally adopted the End Poverty Pledge, committing itself to pay the Real Living Wage, review accessibility of key public venues, and embed poverty considerations into future policy decisions. The pledge was endorsed at Full Council on 10th February 2026 as part of the same meeting that approved the council's final budget before local government reorganisation, following earlier approval by the Community and Wellbeing Committee on 13th January, and forms part of a wider Surrey initiative led by the Epsom-based charity Good Company.

Under the pledge, the council has committed to pay the Real Living Wage to all council staff from April 2026, provide training to staff to improve understanding of poverty, review accessibility of community venues such as Bourne Hall, and include poverty considerations in Equality Impact Assessments for all future policies. Council leader **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) said: "As a council, we are committed to supporting all our residents, including ensuring that those facing financial pressures are not left behind. The End Poverty Pledge helps sharpen our focus on understanding the barriers some of our residents face and working with our partners to remove them, so that Epsom & Ewell is a place where everyone feels supported and included. We also recognise the wellbeing of our workforce as an important part of that commitment. By adopting the Real Living Wage, we aim to help staff more reliably meet living costs, contributing to a better quality of life for those who deliver our services every day."

Community and Wellbeing Committee chair **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said: "We know that rising costs

continue to affect many individuals and families across the borough. At Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, we have a long history of supporting vulnerable residents. Our Health & Wellbeing Strategy continues to deliver a range of initiatives aimed at improving mental and emotional wellbeing, alongside community services and support for key voluntary organisations including Age Concern and the Citizens Advice Bureau. We want every resident to feel included, and the pledge ensures that compassion, awareness and practical support remain embedded in everything we deliver for our community.”

The council will work alongside Good Company, which operates food banks and led the borough’s recent Poverty Truth Commission. Its founder **Jonathan Lees** said: “Good Company started its operations in Epsom & Ewell nearly 14 years ago; sadly, there is still a real need here. It’s fantastic that the council has officially committed and signed up to work with us and other partners to address poverty in our community.”

Although Epsom & Ewell is widely seen as prosperous, council data shows stark inequalities, including a seven-year difference in life expectancy between wards, with Ruxley, Court and Town wards performing worst, and significant numbers of residents relying on food banks or subsidised food schemes. Socio-economic factors account for about 40% of health outcomes, underlining the impact of income on wellbeing even in an affluent borough.

The Real Living Wage, which the council has pledged to adopt, is independently calculated each year by the Living Wage Foundation based on the actual cost of living and currently stands at £12.00 per hour nationally compared with the statutory National Living Wage, set by government, which is lower and forecast to reach £11.89 per hour from April 2026. The Real Living Wage is voluntary and intended to reflect what workers need to meet everyday living costs rather than the legal minimum employers must pay.

It remains unclear how many, if any, EEBC staff are currently paid below the Real Living Wage, as most council employees fall within nationally negotiated salary scales that already exceed that level. The pledge may therefore have limited direct financial impact on many existing staff, although it could affect lower-graded roles, casual workers or future contracted staff depending on procurement decisions.

Some of the pledge’s commitments focus on awareness and culture rather than direct financial support, including training staff to recognise poverty issues and reviewing how welcoming Bourne Hall is to residents facing hardship. The council will also ensure poverty is explicitly considered when developing future policies through Equality Impact Assessments, which could influence decisions on service delivery and access.

The pledge was adopted during the same meeting that approved a 2.98% council tax increase, the maximum allowed without a referendum, raising questions about whether such increases could worsen financial pressure for some residents. In practice, many of the poorest households receive Council Tax Support, which reduces or eliminates their bill, meaning they may be shielded from the increase, but residents on modest incomes who do not qualify for support may still feel the impact.

The End Poverty Pledge reflects growing recognition that poverty exists alongside affluence in Epsom & Ewell, and while its commitments may influence how the council operates and makes decisions, its real significance will depend on whether those commitments lead to measurable improvements for residents facing hardship. As Jonathan Lees observed, there remains “a real need here,” and whether the pledge marks a turning point or remains primarily a statement of intent will become clearer as the council approaches its replacement by the new East Surrey unitary authority in 2027.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: Mart Production

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Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association invites Cyril Frazer Award entries

7 March 2026

**Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association****Twinned with Chantilly, France**

Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association is inviting applications for this year's **Cyril Frazer Award**, a prize established in memory of Cyril Frazer, who died in 2016. Cyril Frazer was Mayor of Epsom and Ewell when the town was first twinned with Chantilly in 1995 and was a founding member of the association. Alongside his commitment to town twinning, he was passionate about singing and was a keen member of the Epsom Male Voice Choir.

Both of these interests are reflected in the award, which offers a top prize of £500 and is open to individuals and groups within the Borough. The award will be made to qualified applicants who meet some or all of the agreed criteria, including living or studying in the Borough, meeting a special need such as mental or physical health, benefiting young people, having cultural or educational value, being related to music or the performing arts, furthering friendships or links with Chantilly, or supporting a key twinning or community event.

Last year's winner was Sarah Carpenter of Southfield Primary School, with runners-up Siobhan Cornell and Jo Johnstone from the French and Music departments at Wallace Fields Junior School, and Olivia Gioffredo from Epsom College. The winner received a £500 grant to support French visits and learning activities planned by Southfield Park School, while the joint runners-up each received £250 to support their work in French education and musical study.

Association secretary Diana Deavin said: "Last year we were very impressed by the quality of the submissions received, which is why we awarded a total of £1,000 in the end. We are looking forward to receiving ideas and suggestions and are hopeful that this year will exceed our expectations once again. Please do consider submitting an application, as we are keen to receive entries from as wide as possible a range of potential beneficiaries and keep Cyril's name alive in this very meaningful way."

The prize will be awarded at the Twinning Association's AGM in June, with a closing date for applications of **May 31, 2026**. For further information or to apply, contact diana@epsomtwinning.com.

Related report:

Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association presents Cyril Frazer Awards for 2025

Edinburgh Duke visits Surrey's Arts University

7 March 2026



Thursday 12th February, The Duke of Edinburgh visited University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and its School of Creative & Cultural Industries, to celebrate it providing 170 years of practice-based, creative education and to meet its current young creatives who study across traditional and emerging arts.

UCA welcomed The Duke, who has a professional background in the creative industries and is a Patron of a range of organisations that aim to widen opportunities within the sector.

His Royal Highness was met at UCA by Joint Acting Vice-Chancellors, Professor Melanie Gray and Professor Mark Ellul, alongside Chancellor, Dame Magdalene Odundo; Executive Dean, Professor Sophy Smith; and Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Partnerships & Industry Engagement, Professor Lyndsay Duthie.

Professors Gray and Ellul, commented: "We are honoured to welcome HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, a recognised champion of the arts, to UCA in Farnham. We were delighted to give His Royal Highness a tour of our specialist facilities, where he got hands-on experience of traditional crafts to future-facing technologies, and introduce him to the next generation of creatives, our talented student community."

The Duke was also introduced to globally renowned fashion designer and UCA Chancellor Emerita, Dame Zandra Rhodes. Zandra began her own creative career at UCA, studying at one of its former art colleges in the 1960s, which she credits as the foundation for her creativity.

Other alumni to meet The Duke included actor Gabin Kongolo, who made history as the first Black person to perform and

speak Welsh on stage at Shakespeare’s Globe and ceramicist Tim Fluck, a British Ceramics Biennial Fresh Talent Award winner.

The Duke’s tour formally commenced in UCA’s creative workshops, including its glass studio, where UCA is among only a handful of specialist institutions in the UK to offer a degree in the subject. Before the tour shifted up a gear, showcasing UCA’s high-tech filmmaking space, its Virtual Production studio. Students used real-time rendering software and motion capture to immerse His Royal Highness in a scene from Moryow, which was shot in the space and will make its debut on the film festival circuit later this year.

Professor Duthie then led a Creative Economy Roundtable discussion in which The Duke actively participated, alongside UCA academics and members of the University’s very own Creative & Cultural Industries Leaders Network, as well as alumni.

Professor Duthie said: “The UK’s creative and cultural industries contribute £126bn to the economy and support over 2.4 million jobs. Concurrently the sector is being fundamentally reshaped by emerging technologies. It was encouraging to hear His Royal Highness articulate a vision that aligns so closely with ours. At UCA, we are preparing the next generation not just to adopt new tools, but to shape how they are used — equipping students to think critically, create boldly, and lead an industry evolving faster than ever before.”

The Duke’s tour concluded with the unveiling of an artwork created by second year BA Graphic Design student, Ella Stevenson and received a piece of glassware designed by glass technician, Laura Quinn. The works marked The Duke’s visit, celebrating 170 years of UCA.

The Duke said: “Congratulations on 170 years of developing all those essential arts, crafts and keeping the creative flame well and truly alight.”

University of the Creative Arts.

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