

## Age Concern Epsom and Ewell's 75th

9 April 2022



Surrey Brass Friday 8th April entertained over 100 in the magnificent main hall of Epsom College in aid of local 75 years old this year charity Age Concern Epsom and Ewell. The charity's mission statement is: "Empowering older people in Epsom & Ewell to live the most fulfilling lives they can." The charity has an army of volunteers who befriend their clients with regular visits, help with DIY, drives to medical appointments, support for a foot clinic and a free hearing aid clinic, advice and information and other services. With demands on its services ever rising this Epsom and Ewell based charity can be proud of its year on year growth with income rising from £125,000 in 2017 to £258,000 year end March 2021. However, the Charity's Chief Officer Dorah May explains that the challenges of the Co-Vid pandemic are placing a strain on finances with reserves being used up. "Public support is needed more than ever to keep current services going."



As their 75th year continues Age Concern Epsom and Ewell will combine its celebration with the Platinum Jubilee and recycle old hats that will be part of their Jubilee themed stall appearing in the Epsom Market Square on Thursdays throughout the month of May. Marie Thackwell, the charity's fundraising and marketing coordinator, said "I'm really looking forward to establishing some fun events and we already have a few great things lined up for the year ahead - after all it's Age Concern Epsom and Ewell's 75th anniversary - now that's something worth celebrating."

The Charity's monthly Sunday teas at Stoneleigh Methodist Church continue...



## Epsom and Ewell gears up for Ukrainian refugees

9 April 2022



Tuesday 29th March over 160 local citizens converged on St Joseph's Church Hall for an information evening about hosting Ukrainian refugees. Half the hands in the room went up when asked who is willing to host refugees fleeing the war. There was overwhelming enthusiasm for the aid the community can bring to the urgent need for hosting Ukrainian refugees.

Joanna Sherring of the Epsom Refugee Network chaired the event and introduced local refugee supporters with experience of hosting and teaching English. Nina Kaye spoke about her experiences of opening her home to no less than 30 Syrian refugees since 2015. It is a big but rewarding commitment and friends for life are made. The important point was made that most refugees want to return home. Making them welcome here is a small way to meet the trauma of forced displacement.

The Government rules about hosting were explained including a requirement that hosts undergo a "Disclosure and Barring Check" (DBS). Basically this means a check about any criminal record. Apparently these rules are welcomed by Ukrainians especially as men are required to remain in Ukraine and the majority of

guests will be women and children.

You can find out more information and guidance on the Epsom Refugee Network website [here](#).

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## Epsom and Ewell stands with Ukraine

9 April 2022



**Epsom accountant Nataliya Irvine is among 350 volunteers working tirelessly to collect essential items at the Ashley Centre in the town to send to Ukraine where her family are currently living in the war zone.**

They operate under the name Surrey Stands With Ukraine

“It’s good to be doing something”, Nataliya tells me as we sit down in a coffee shop to speak with each other about the incredible work that she and others are doing on behalf of Ukraine. Nataliya, since Sunday, has been organising local people in Epsom to collect donations of essential items, for those suffering from the current conflict. The vital and impassioned work she’s doing is supported by a network of amazing volunteers, whose numbers have swollen from 4 to 350, in one month.

Nataliya, who is Ukrainian, approaches the task with an almost sombre necessity. Her mother, sisters, brother and step-father, are all in Ukraine as we speak to each other, she worries about them day and night. I ask whether they’re collecting as much as they expected and she tells me that it’s more than they ever imagined. Nataliya emphasises just how supportive the local community has been, just how many locals have been willing to give up their possessions, and even their time, to help the people of Ukraine.

“It started independently”, she says, when I ask about the genesis of the idea. Nataliya tells me that it was just her, speaking with her family on the phone and sending them money for vital medical supplies, that were then being given to hospitals in Lviv. Nataliya began to reach out to friends and organise couriers to deliver supplies directly to the Polish-Ukrainian border with assistance from her local gym, FitnessTheory, who provided a vital place to store the items before they were sent off. What started as 4 people looking to make a small difference to the humanitarian effort, has expanded to a 350-strong group, with a committee and community hub, generously given by the Ashley Centre in Epsom, organising donation efforts on a much larger scale. Locally based registered charity Harrop HR Missions Ltd was able to step up and provide the legal entity to facilitate the operation. To have achieved all this, while worrying about her family in Ukraine, all a person can do is admire the strength and bravery of Nataliya and the many other Ukrainians working with her.

The charity has raised over £80,000 and sent over £450,000 worth of supplies to Ukraine in 11 van runs.

At the Drop-Off point in the centre, boxes upon boxes of supplies are piled high, but the spirits of the volunteers are higher. I was lucky enough to be able to spend a little bit of time observing the operation during one of its few quiet moments, and I was blown away by the compassion, focus and drive that pushes these selfless volunteers to go above and beyond for a country that most of them have never been to. They’re laughing together; they’re supporting each other mentally, physically and spiritually, drawn together and emboldened by a shared sense of duty, to deliver the help that Ukrainians dearly need right now. The whole time I was there, one word kept going through my head: Community, and that’s what I saw; a united community, together for a common purpose, selflessly working together to achieve it.

Many individuals have made what Nataliya and her fellow volunteers are doing possible. David Barnes, the lead volunteer, sits at the front desk all day greeting all those who wish to help with a smile. The volunteers I spoke with all told me that David’s work is above and beyond, and his contributions are truly vital. David Meadows, the general manager of the Ashley Centre, has also enormously supported them, allowing the group to use an unused unit of the centre, as their operations hub and donation point. Other individuals that gave both resources and time to help this cause are numerous: Councillor Neil Dallen facilitated contacts, Steve Moore’s guidance on marketing allowed them to tap into social media, James Brook, an architect also working out of the Ashley Centre, provided vital organisational support.

The team members I spoke to were full of appreciation for one another, people like Roy and Kim Deadman, Jess and Pinch Tarrant, Zoe, Ross and Luda, among many others. On top of each and every local Ukrainian who set aside time to help their country get the vital supplies it needs. This appreciation should also be applied to every single person who has donated food, money or any other item to this cause, their help is invaluable and is making a positive difference in the lives of people in need. Epsom should be truly proud of how it’s come together in a time of great melancholy for Europe and the world, to provide hope and more crucially material aid, for the citizens of Ukraine who are unable, or unwilling, to leave their homes.

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## Support for Afghan Refugees

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Following the British and allies’ humiliation in Afghanistan in August this year the UK Government has urged local Councils to participate in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme. The urgent need is to provide homes to those refugees who fled from the Taliban takeover and are currently in temporary accommodation in the UK. Funds are promised to local authorities willing to support the resettlement of Afghan interpreters and others (and their families), who worked for UK Forces, the UK Embassy and other official British interests.

The scheme supports rent and other housing costs, local authority support staff salaries and “integration support” (e.g., English language, education and health). The funds promised by the Government range over a three year period from £22,340 for one adult in a one bedroom property to £134,040 for a 2 adult 4 children family in a 4 bedroom property.

The Council Officers recommended that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council undertake support for 2 families but an amendment moved by Court Ward Councillor Kate Chinn (Labour) was accepted by all Councillors and 5 families will be supported. The greatest challenge to the programme will be identifying landlords willing to provide suitable properties.

Nina Kaye of the Epsom Refugee Network responded to the decision We are pleased to hear that the Council has voted to take up to five Afghan families being re-settled under the LES (Locally Employed Staff) scheme. These families have risked so much to support our troops in Afghanistan and as a result have had to flee their homes and their country. There are many highly skilled individuals in this group who will be a real asset to our Community. Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network will be working with the Council to support these families when they arrive, helping them to learn English and settle into life in the UK”.

Joanna Sherring of Epsom Community Sponsorship stated: “Our Charity is applying to be a Community Sponsorship group in Epsom & Ewell and it’s great to see such support for refugees in our community. Hopefully we will never know what it feels like to lose everything and have to start a new life in a different country. I am so proud to be part of a such a passionate group of people who want to offer the chance of a new life to a refugee family”

Epsom and Ewell is by no means alone in the County in supporting the scheme with all the other 10 District Councils supporting between 2 (Mole Valley) and 5 to 10 (Waverley).

Full details of the scheme and Government explanations are available [HERE](#)