

Local NHS Doctors and Consultants striking

18 September 2023



As tensions mount within the UK healthcare sector, doctors across the country are gearing up for strike action. The looming industrial action has sent ripples of concern through the local Epsom healthcare system and the wider public, sparking a heated debate about the grievances motivating these medical professionals to take such measures.

In a week that promises to bring a fresh wave of challenges, hospitals across the UK brace themselves as a new round of strikes is set to commence. On Wednesday, consultants and junior doctors are set to unite in a day of industrial action, marking the first instance of such joint protest. The impact of this combined strike action is expected to weigh heavily on healthcare facilities, with St George's, **Epsom** and St Helier hospitals particularly vulnerable, having recently grappled with the added strain of a heatwave.

Amid this turbulence, healthcare authorities call upon the public to exercise discretion in their use of NHS services. It's emphasized that individuals should continue to seek medical care during emergencies or when they have scheduled appointments.

Dr. **Richard Jennings**, the Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, **Epsom**, and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, acknowledges the upcoming challenges: "While we do everything we can to minimize the impact strikes have on our patients, there is no denying this week will be very challenging for us. There's been little respite this year, with several rounds of industrial action already taking place, not to mention our emergency departments becoming busier with the hotter weather. And with further industrial action planned for this autumn, and winter on the way, we would expect these extreme pressures to continue for some time."

The joint strike is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, with consultants and junior doctors ensuring emergency care remains available. However, elective surgeries and non-emergency appointments will be rescheduled. On Tuesday, September 19, some consultants will also strike while providing Christmas Day cover, and junior doctors will stage a complete walkout on Thursday, September 21, and Friday, September 22.

During this period, the public is urged to use NHS services judiciously to ensure that the most critical cases receive timely attention. It's essential to bear in mind that visiting an emergency department for non-life-threatening issues may not result in quicker service.

Dr. Jennings advises, "We must prioritize our sickest and most seriously ill patients. That means if you attend our emergency departments and it's not life-threatening, you may be redirected to a more appropriate service. You can help us by using NHS 111 online, which is a 24/7 service and can direct you to where you need to go when your healthcare need is less urgent. But when it's an emergency or life-threatening, you should always call 999 or visit an emergency department."

Numerous inpatient and outpatient appointments have already been rescheduled due to this year's strike action, with more disruptions expected this time around. However, those with scheduled appointments are encouraged to attend unless notified otherwise. Alternative options, such as GP surgeries and pharmacies, remain largely unaffected by the strikes and can assist with common ailments like tonsillitis, coughs, colds, and earaches. Minor injuries like sprains and strains can be managed at home, or a pharmacist can provide guidance on the appropriate treatment.

For individuals in need of mental health support during a crisis in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, or Wandsworth, the South West London 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line is available at 0800 028 8000. More information can be found at <https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/patients-carers/crisis-support/mental-health-support-line>. Similarly, in Surrey and North East Hampshire, support is accessible 24/7 for adults, young people, and children by calling 0800 915 4644. Additional information can be found at <https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services>.

The dates for strike action are as follows:

- Consultants: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Tuesday, September 19, to 8 am on Thursday, September 21.
- Junior doctors: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Wednesday, September 20; full walkout from 7 am on Thursday, September 21, to 7 am on Saturday, September 23.
- Both consultants and junior doctors will be striking on Monday, October 2, Tuesday, October 3, and Wednesday, October 4, providing Christmas Day cover.

To understand the situation better, The Epsom and Ewell Times has delved into the arguments put forth by UK doctors explaining their reasons for considering a strike.

1. **Pay and Working Conditions:** One of the primary concerns voiced by doctors is the state of their pay and working conditions. Many doctors argue that their wages have not kept pace with the cost of living, and they face long working hours that often stretch them to the limit. Some argue that these conditions not only affect their own well-being but also put patient safety at risk.
2. **Staff Shortages:** The shortage of medical staff, including doctors and nurses, is another major concern. Doctors are often working in understaffed hospitals and clinics, leading to burnout and suboptimal patient care. They argue that without adequate staffing levels, patient safety is compromised, and they are unable to provide the level of care they would like to deliver.
3. **Patient Care:** Doctors frequently emphasize their commitment to providing high-quality patient care. However, they argue that the current conditions make it increasingly challenging to maintain the level of care patients deserve. Overcrowded emergency rooms, lengthy waiting times, and limited resources all contribute to a deteriorating quality of care.
4. **Mental Health:** The toll on doctors' mental health is a pressing issue. The immense stress and emotional burden of their work can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Doctors argue that addressing these mental health challenges is essential to ensure they can continue to provide effective care to patients.
5. **NHS Funding:** Doctors are also concerned about the overall funding of the National Health Service (NHS). They argue that the NHS needs increased funding to address the aforementioned issues adequately. Insufficient funding, they claim, hampers efforts to improve working conditions and patient care.
6. **Privatization Concerns:** Some doctors express worries about the gradual privatization of healthcare services in the UK. They fear that privatization could lead to a two-tier healthcare system, where those who can afford private care receive better services, leaving the public healthcare system further strained.

The doctors' strike is viewed by many as a last resort, taken only after exhausting negotiations with government officials and healthcare administrators. While the potential strike has raised concerns about the impact on patients, it also serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by medical professionals in the UK.

As the situation continues to develop, the nation watches closely, hoping for a resolution that can address the doctors' concerns while safeguarding the healthcare needs of the population. The outcome of this ongoing debate will undoubtedly have significant implications for the future of healthcare in the United Kingdom.

Angels sing their hearts out for Ukraine

18 September 2023



Epsom Social in the Epsom Square was the heart of Epsom last night as rock band The Angels beat loudly for Ukraine aid. Organised by Epsom based Surrey Stands with Ukraine (SSWU), 9 piece band The Angels rocked a packed Epsom Social with a broad range of great songs. The Angels and Epsom Social donated their time and premises to the latest project of SSWU: a fire engine for Ukraine.

Roy Deadman, who chairs SSWU reminded everyone that the war goes on, the need for aid continues. “No one in the charity receives a penny. We are all volunteers. But what we do is nothing compared with what Ukrainians are doing to protect Europe from Putin.”

He went on to praise partners Medical Life Lines Ukraine (MLLU) who have to date sent 36 ambulances and a crane to the war-torn country.

Courtesy of The Ashley Centre SSWU runs its operations from offices in Global House, Ashley Avenue in Epsom. Premises shared with the Epsom Refugee Network (ERN) and used for English classes and advice sessions for refugees in the area.

The public can visit the SSWU kiosk at anytime in the main mall of the Ashley Centre and continue to donate money and necessities.

New volunteers are always welcome to help all these charitable efforts.

SSWU and MLLU are names for volunteer groups working through registered charity Harrop HR Missions Ltd (1117155), a charity founded and directed by Epsom solicitor Lionel Blackman.

ERN operates under the Epsom based registered charity The Good Company (Surrey) 1197493 directed by Jonathan Lees.

Classic growth versus environment dilemma

18 September 2023



Just 20 miles from **Epsom** weekend flights at **Farnborough Airport** could more than double if expansion plans go ahead.

The airport’s owners are seeking to increase the annual number of flights from 50,000 to 70,000 a year – including a jump in weekend traffic from 8,900 to 18,900. They also hope to have aeroplanes taking off and landing from 7am to 9pm on weekends and public holidays, an hour earlier – and later – than currently permitted.

They say the increase in flights is needed to meet shifting needs of business travellers, opponents say the airport is trying to cash in on leisure and holiday travel. Airport bosses say the move will create thousands of new jobs in the area and are urging people to have their say on the proposals at a series of consultation events.

John Eriksson, chairperson of the Farnborough Noise action group said the people in the area already have no respite from the jet engines. He said his main concerns over the expansion were that it was yet another consultation before a review into the impact of airspace changes had concluded.

The claimed economic benefits, he said, were still being assessed by **Rushmoor Borough Council**’s oversight and scrutiny committee, and that the Government’s own climate change committee stated there should be no increase in aviation until the industry was able to reduce emissions.

He said that on average, planes from Farnborough carried 2.5 passengers per flight, with many not carrying any. Mr Eriksson said: “We’re going to have a continuous drone of aircraft noise. They already fly at a lower altitude to get under Heathrow and Gatwick airspace.”

Richard Nobbs, another Farnborough Noise member, said the growth of the airport had been “highly detrimental for the area”. He added: “We are going to end up with an increase in pollution, an increase in noise. Farnborough Airport will say this is needed because it will make a big contribution to the local area, but I don’t see that. Most of the flights are to holiday destinations.”

The airport, one of the largest employment sites in the area, has said it would publish detailed information about its proposals from September 20. They claim the changes would enable it to be a “catalyst for long-term economic prosperity in the region” and support 4,100 jobs by 2040.

Opponents say it serves mostly private clients with jets averaging 2.5 passengers per trip. Campaigners said this makes it difficult to justify the airport expansion’s economic argument.

The airport argues it contributes £200m to the local economy each year, which in turn supports thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the process.

Simon Geere, Farnborough Airport chief executive, said: “By satisfying the growing demand for connectivity from Farnborough Airport, our proposals will create hundreds of new jobs within the local community and give a boost to the unique aerospace cluster that we are part of. This will be vitally important for the future economic prosperity of the region. At the same time, Farnborough Airport is leading the way on airport sustainability.

“We recently achieved Level 4+ Carbon Neutrality which is the highest possible accolade, and last year we set ourselves one of the most ambitious targets in the industry, by committing to be Net Zero across our controllable emissions by 2030 or sooner. We are looking forward to sharing our proposals for the future of the Airport with the local community and receiving feedback on how we can continue to contribute to the ongoing economic prosperity of the communities we serve.

Further details are available at FarnboroughAirport2040.com.

The consultation will close on October 18 2023.

Following the consultation, the airport intends to submit its planning application in November 2023 after which a 16-week statutory consultation will follow.

It expects the first planning decision to be made in March 2024.

Image: MilborneOne CC BY-SA 3.0

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

18 September 2023



Earlier today Epsom and Ewell Times published a press release clearly attributed to Surrey County Council. Below is a report from our BBC Local Democracy Reporting Service partner which casts a somewhat different light on the presentation of the Report by Surrey County Council.

Surrey's Fire and Rescue Service "needs to do more" to prepare and train for incidents in tall buildings, such as in the Grenfell tragedy, according to inspectors.

In a report released on Wednesday (September 13) inspectors gave a "requires improvement" rating to seven areas they looked at, with three areas rated "adequate" and one rated "good".

Roy Wilsher's report said he was satisfied with some aspects of the service's performance in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks, but said improvement was needed in some areas.

He said: "Given the nature of some of the problems we have identified, we will keep in close contact with the service to monitor its progress."

The fire and rescue service was given a requires improvement rating in the areas of preventing fire and risk, responding to fires and emergencies, best use of resources and promoting fairness and diversity, among others.

The report sets out that Surrey's fire and rescue service covers an area of 645 square miles and 1.2 million people.

An action plan will look at areas for improvement

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service said it was bringing together an "improvement plan" to address all areas for improvement highlighted in the report.

Chief fire officer **Dan Quin** said: "We know that there are areas where we can still improve and we will address these issues as a priority. While we had expected a more positive outcome in certain areas we recognise the benefits of an independent inspectorate. This is an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our current programmes and strategies. Our aim is to address the recommendations and further improve our services.

"I would like to thank the inspectors for taking the time to learn about our work, for their recommendations and for holding us to account. We remain committed to becoming an outstanding service as we continue to put our communities first."

Inspector 'disappointed' with tall building policies and procedures

Under the category of responding to major and multi-agency incidents, Mr Wilsher rated the service "requires improvement".

He said the service needed to do more to "prepare and train for incidents in tall buildings", such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy in which 72 people died in Kensington in 2017. He said only a "limited amount" of realistic training and exercising at tall buildings had been done, and that it hadn't included all staff groups that would be expected to respond to such an incident.

Mr Wilsher's report said: "We were disappointed to find that the service had only developed a limited number of policies and procedures for safely managing this type of incident. It has procedures in place detailing the role of the evacuation officer but no effective tall buildings evacuation policy for operational and control room staff. The service should address these policy gaps as a matter of urgency."

The inspection also saw a new "cause of concern" given, regarding the service not being able to accurately identify how many high-risk premises it has.

The inspector said within 28 days an action plan should be provided which would look at identifying the highest risk premises and making sure all staff were aware of expectations of them.

What has improved?

While Mr Wilsher did say inspectors were "disappointed" more progress hadn't been made since a 2021 inspection, he did say there had been "significant change" in the leadership team as well as the transfer of some workforce to London Fire Brigade last year.

The only area rated "good" was "promoting the right values and culture". According to the report: "We were encouraged by the cultural improvements the service has made. The service is displaying more visible leadership, and the area for improvement we described during our last inspection has been discharged."

He added there was a "clear commitment" from staff and leaders to improve, with "some good foundations in place" but said it was "important the service gains momentum and moves forward".

As well as that, Mr Wilsher said SFRS had good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents, helping keep them safe during and after incidents. This was under a "requires improvement" rating for the "responding to fires and other emergencies" part of the inspection.

Mr Quin said: "I am extremely proud of the hard work happening across our service and want to thank all of our team for playing their part. As a service we are committed to creating a fully inclusive workplace where everybody feels supported. The improvement of the service's culture was a priority for all staff, so we are delighted to see these efforts recognised."

The full breakdown of services in each category is as follows:

Good: Promoting values and culture

Adequate: Understanding fire and risk, future affordability, right people, right skills

Requires improvement: Preventing fire and risk, public safety through fire regulation, responding to fires and emergencies, responding to major incidents, best use of resources, promoting fairness and diversity, managing performance and developing leaders

Inadequate: None

Related report:

Surrey Fire service praised

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

18 September 2023



Following years of complaints of dust and noise pollution from the **Chalk Pit** site on **College Road, Epsom**, residents and local campaigners say that stricter council enforcement is still needed amidst claims that site owners are operating outside of the conditions of their planning permission.

The land at The Chalk Pit, College Road, Epsom, Surrey is an industrial and commercial site home to several waste management facilities including **Skip It Epsom Ltd** and **Epsom Skip Hire**.

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An application to transform what was a waste transfer site to a materials recycling centre was first made in 2017 but such an upscaling of operations remained unlicensed until 2 May 2023 when retrospective planning permission was granted by **Surrey County Council** (SCC). The permission is subject to several conditions including limitations on working hours as well as the containment of operations within a secondary building to mitigate resulting dust and noise pollution.

Reports from locals say that the site is much quieter in recent months attributing this to enforcement from Surrey County Council to turn off a loud trommel which previously operated at the site. However, they also report that operations are taking place outside of the agreed hours of working resulting in continued distress.

Residents and local councillors have expressed repeated concerns since the change of operations in 2020 surrounding the impact of noise and dust to the mental and physical wellbeing of residents, as well as concerns surrounding the impact on the local environment.

At present a building to contain operations is under construction and operations are continuing pending its completion. Skip It made an application to SCC on 4 May seeking permission to continue processing waste outside of a building for up to 6 months whilst the building is under construction. Residents express strong opposition to the redactions.

Campaigners, including MP for Epsom and Ewell, **Chris Grayling**, have asked that tighter council enforcement of the planning conditions be implemented as well as urging the **Environment Agency** (EA) to maintain tight control on the waste permit conditions and to ensure the building to enclose operations is fit for purpose. Residents have also expressed concern over the number of lorries at the site causing noise in neighbouring roads which cannot be contained.

Skip It, who own the recycling centre, claim that their business has been victim to disproportionate targeting of complaints, saying that many of the passing vehicles belong to other site users and that their vehicle numbers are within council guidelines.

Skip It director, **Mo Maan**, told the **Epsom and Ewell Times**: “We modified a few things to suit our operation...no major change, because the building is going up.”

He continued: “If there was illegal activity, the Environment Agency and the council would have shut the site down, which they’re very good at doing. The same situation with dust – if the dust was so bad, don’t you think that we would have been shut down by now?”



Aerial view of the Chalk Pit site cc Google Sat.

Planning documents, which can be found on the Surrey County Council website, show information regarding the extent of noise and dust assessments.

In July 2021 a Noise Impact Assessment by the EA (known as the ‘Tofts report’) stated that “NJB [land now operated on by Skip It Epsom Ltd] was at least 10dB louder than [Epsom Skip Hire] and was responsible for all of the measured noise” and stated the presence of “noise abnormal and prolonged enough to cause significant effect on human senses”.

In November 2021, however, a report by **7th Wave Acoustics** stated that “it is likely that the noise from the on-site active processing operations will not result in adverse noise impact” and the site was “acceptable in noise assessment terms.”

Skip It director Mo Maan told Epsom and Ewell Times: “We’ve had noise assessments done, which cost me a fortune to get done – independently, and by the Environment Agency and the council.” Maan continued: “We’ve got planning permission, we’re putting a building up, but they’re still complaining.”

Former College Ward Epsom Councillor **Nigel Collin** told the Epsom and Ewell Times: “History has shown us that the operator plays the game well when it comes to observing the licence when a planning application is under consideration. Normal disruptive service resumes once the planning outcome is determined.”

On 25 July 2023 Councillor **Bernie Muir** put a motion to council proposing that they install professional noise measurement equipment around the Chalk Pit site, leaving the equipment in place for a minimum period of three months, and responding to any breaches of noise regulations on the site with the imposition of a noise abatement order. It was suggested that £60k be allocated to the project. A vote on the motion has been deferred to the next **Environment Committee** on October 17.

Cllr Muir told the Epsom and Ewell Times that previous monitoring had not been sufficient in identifying which landowner was causing the nuisance and hence the results of the assessments were “unactionable”.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has faced criticism from residents for failing to issue an abatement notice to cease operations during the period of unlicensed operations to put a stop to the resulting noise pollution.

Nigel Collin described the council’s handling of the situation as “inept” and expressed concern over the lack of an overarching person or body taking responsibility for the situation.

EEBC told the Epsom and Ewell Times: “The areas of responsibility around the Chalk Pit site are complex and EEBC, SCC Planning and the EA all have different roles. EEBC have taken a leading role in co-ordinating a multi-organisational response to the various issues arising from the site. This includes regular multi-agency co-ordination briefings and a commitment to continue working with all agencies in trying to improve the lived experience of those living near to the Chalk Pit.”

“EEBC takes its responsibilities to all residents seriously and will always act where sufficient evidence is found of a statutory nuisance. The evidence gathered during the noise monitoring demonstrated that there was certainly audible noise at times from the site which could be considered as having a negative impact on the local amenity, but not enough to be considered a statutory nuisance.”

Nigel Collin, who has been a key figure in the fight against the unlicensed operations, said the definition of statutory nuisance was ‘more than met’.

Efforts from councillors to enforce restrictions at the Chalk Pit have been cross-party with councillors Steve McCormick (RA), John Beckett (RA) and Bernie Muir (Con) and Kieran Persand (Con) at the forefront of negotiations.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said that they have not closed the case and that they will continue to work with the SSC and the Environment Agency to ensure statutory nuisance thresholds are not exceeded.

Surrey Fire service praised

18 September 2023



Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has received positive feedback for its progress in culture in an official report published today, 13 September 2023.

Following an inspection of the service by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) throughout March and April, inspectors praised the ‘positive working culture.’

The report stated that the inspector was ‘encouraged’ by the cultural improvements that were evident in the service, adding: “*Staff understand the values well and demonstrate positive behaviours. We saw that service leaders have improved their visibility and approachability.*

“*There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours.*”

The findings also highlighted that the service is good at keeping the public informed and has an effective Community Risk Management Plan in place.

The report outlines areas where the service has done well, areas for improvement and a ‘cause of concern’ regarding the risk-based inspection programme. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service are bringing together an improvement plan to address all of the areas for improvement that have been highlighted in the report.

Chief Fire Officer, Dan Quin said: “*I am extremely proud of the hard work happening across our service and want to thank all of our team for playing their part. As a service we are committed to creating a fully inclusive workplace where everybody feels supported. The improvement of the service’s culture was a priority for all staff, so we are delighted to see these efforts recognised.*

He added: “*We know that there are areas where we can still improve and we will address these issues as a priority.*

“*While we had expected a more positive outcome in certain areas we recognise the benefits of an independent inspectorate. This is an opportunity for us to reevaluate our current programmes and strategies. Our aim is to address the recommendations and further improve our services. I would like to thank the inspectors for taking the time to learn about our work, for their recommendations and for holding us to account. We remain committed to becoming an outstanding service as we continue to put our communities first.*”

Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, Denise Turner Stewart said: “*Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Leadership Team have put in place programmes of work to improve all areas since the last inspection in 2021. I am delighted that the inspectors recognised the progress made on SFRS’ cultural improvement journey.*

“*I’d like to thank everyone within the service for their continued dedication and for demonstrating our positive working culture to inspectors. Staff showed exceptional commitment to support the inspection process.*

“*It’s important to acknowledge that there are areas that demand immediate attention. We are fully committed to addressing these areas with diligence. Our goal is to make substantial and ongoing improvement. We look forward to demonstrating these improvements with HMICFRS.*”

Related Report:

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

Independent Surrey SEND school slammed

18 September 2023



A “culture of discrimination and inequality” goes unaddressed at a school for children with additional needs, where pupils “fear reprisals” from some senior staff if they report concerns, according to Ofsted inspectors.

An inspection into the independent school was requested “as promptly as possible” by the Department for Education, following complaints from parents.

Inspectors described a “negative culture” across staff, pupils and parents at the school, pupils subject to “racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours” and leaders not showing the “capacity to lead and improve the school”.

Their findings rated **Wemms Education Centre**, in Long Ditton, inadequate overall and in the areas of behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management, in a report published on Tuesday (September 12).

The quality of education at the school and its sixth form provision were both rated “good”, and inspectors said teachers were clear about what they wanted pupils to learn and how, with curriculum leaders having “expert subject knowledge”.

But inspectors said leaders’ understanding of safeguarding was “weak”, without a shared understanding of what constituted a “serious concern”. Their report said: “Consequently, referrals to other agencies have been too slow, meaning that pupils are placed at risk of harm. Furthermore, senior leaders are not clear about who the most vulnerable pupils in school are.”

Speaking after the report was published Wemms chief executive, **Duncan Murphy**, told the LDRS the report did “not mirror other external reviews of life at Wemms” but accepted that growth has not come without its challenges. He said: “It is no secret that the school challenged some areas of the report; now that it has been published, it is important that we focus on what matters the most – being a school that reflects, learns and ensures that every child has the best possible experience under our tutelage.

“In order to achieve this, we have put together a comprehensive action plan outlining active steps we are taking to amplify our strengths and target areas of improvement. Trustees have added additional capacity to the leadership team, and it is also our aim to diversify and professionalise governance so that there is greater rigour and accountability throughout.”

According to inspectors, “strong work” done at the school was “sullied by a culture of discrimination and inequality that goes unaddressed”.

Pupils at the school are those who have been “unable to cope in mainstream education” and typically have social, emotional and mental health needs with almost all having an education, health and care plan in place.

Inspectors said: “Too many pupils do not feel happy or safe at school. They are fearful of the bullying behaviour of other pupils, which goes unaddressed. During inspection, pupils, staff and parents spoke of the negative impact on pupils of racial and homophobic slurs, inappropriate sexualised language and behaviours. Pupils trust only some adults in school to help them. Many pupils fear a lack of empathy, even reprisals, from certain leaders should they report a concern.”

The Ofsted report said pupils believed they were treated “inconsistently and unfairly” and as such “a culture of intimidation, mistrust and fear abounds”.

Six action points were set out by inspectors for the school, with fees of £50,000 per year, to improve.

Inspectors described relationships within and between all groups of staff as “severely flawed” and said the school was a “deeply fractured community”. They said there was a “a widespread lack of trust and confidence” in the school’s leadership and that parents too were “deeply divided” in their views of the school, particularly its leadership.

According to the Wemms website, the school was “proud to declare itself a ‘marmite’ school... you will love us or hate us”. It said: “Our school is for individuals and mavericks who yearn for a bespoke education, which allows them to learn in their own way and at their own pace.”

With parents able to write to the inspectors as part of the process, the Ofsted report said positive and negative opinions were equally received, and a smaller number wrote with neutral views.

Three quarters of parents who completed Ofsted’s online survey said they would recommend the school, but common themes were raised regarding “unsupportive behaviour towards pupils and parents, particularly regarding the management of concerns”.

Less than a quarter of staff who completed a survey said that the school was well led and managed, and only one third believed they were treated fairly and with respect.

But inspectors said around two thirds remained happy to work at the school and believed leaders were considerate of their workload.

Inspectors said: “A negative culture pervades the school and permeates across staff, pupil and parent groups. Some staff, parents and pupils are wary of leaders and feel unable to air their views or concerns. “Leaders should take urgent action to ensure that members of the school community are able to express their views without fear of reprisals. Leaders should work to establish a positive, shared school ethos.” As well as this, there were concerns that leaders’ responses to pupils’ breaking the rules were “inconsistent and unfair” and that sanctions were not applied consistently.

The report said: “Inspectors heard repeatedly from staff, pupils and parents that pupils are not kept safe from bullying and abuse, including the use of racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours.”

They added that there were no established strategies to address these behaviours and that behaviour and anti-bullying policies were not effectively implemented.

The school’s nurse left the organisation during the course of the inspection in May as a result of her concerns, put in writing to the school in March 2023, relating to safeguarding, medication, staff training and a lack of autonomy to practise as a school nurse.

Staff, pupils and parents also raised concerns about the school’s response to pupils’ medical needs.
What does the school do well?

Inspectors said the pupils’ experiences at the school varied widely, and that the move from a site in Leatherhead to Long Ditton in 2022 had “proved popular”.

They said the pupils generally behaved well in lessons, whether working individually or in twos with a teacher and that there was “high academic ambition” across the school.

The report added: “Pupils achieve strongly across a range of subjects, frequently beyond their own and their family’s expectations. Older pupils learn to drive, helping them to be prepared for their futures. However, these successes are not mirrored in other aspects of school life.”

The LDRS understands some parents do not support the inspector’s findings and are looking into lodging a formal complaint about the Ofsted report. One parent said the school had been a “life changer” for their family.

How the school responded

Duncan Murphy, chief executive of Wemms Education Centre, said the school had a “proud history of supporting children with complex and challenging needs” and two positive previous inspections were the reason for moving to the bigger site.

He said the report did not mirror other external reviews of the school, but added that the school “wholly accept and understand that growth has not come without its challenges”.

With the school having challenged aspects of the report, he also pointed to pupils who “achieve strongly” and that many parents would be happy to recommend the school to others.

Mr Murphy said: “However, there have rightly been questions of consistency which we will seek to address with pace and purpose as we build for the future.”

The school would focus on being one that would reflect, learn and ensure that every child at Wemms had “the best possible experience”, he added.

With an action plan outlining steps being taken, as well as changes to governance for “greater rigour and accountability throughout”, Mr Murphy also said concerns regarding discrimination and inequality were being tackled.

He added: “We firmly believe that our community can once more be united behind a shared vision of excellence for those pupils who need a school like ours the most. It is a source of great regret to us that the essence of this aim has been misplaced since the move to a new site last year, but now is an opportunity to drive improvement and ensure a long and successful future for our school and its community.”

Unprovoked attack on man and his dog in Epsom

18 September 2023



On 5th September 40 year old Scott Smith of Tonstall Road, Epsom assaulted another Epsom man in an “unprovoked attack”. After the assault, during which the victim fought back in self-defence and Smith “came off worse”, Smith kicked the victim’s “innocent” small dog with such force that he rendered the pet unconscious.

The incident took place outside and within a local supermarket and the episode was recorded on the shop’s CCTV camera. This led to the prompt arrest of Smith who was brought in custody before the Surrey Magistrates sitting in Guildford on Saturday 9th September.

Smith pleaded guilty to an offence of common assault and an offence of causing unnecessary suffering to an animal.

The presiding magistrate stated the offences were so serious the decision on sentence would be reached on another day when all “sentencing options” would be considered.

Hampton Court ULEZ maze challenge

18 September 2023



The expansion of London’s Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to the Surrey border affects attractions like Hampton Court Palace, some of which is on the charge boundary.

ULEZ, introduced by Transport for London to improve air quality in the capital, sees drivers of non-compliant cars charged to enter the area it covers.

Hampton Court Palace, located alongside the Thames and just over Hampton Court Bridge from Surrey is largely inside the new London ULEZ however some routes from its car park avoid charges.

The A308 towards Staines and the M3 forms the border of the ULEZ, meaning cars travelling along it are not passing into the zone.

Therefore non-compliant cars will not need to pay the daily charge of £12.50, and those driving to Hampton Court Palace will not be in the zone on entering the landmark’s car park.

However the exit from the palace’s car park is on the other side of the roundabout, where Hampton Court Road continues towards Kingston, and is just inside the charging zone.

According to a camera map on ulez.co.uk, the first camera on the A308 is further up the road, on the corner with Campbell Road.

This means drivers coming out of the car park and turning left to go back towards the roundabout, as they would need to, may not be caught entering the zone.

In response to a query on Twitter about driving to and from the palace in the newly-extended zone, Historic Royal Palaces said: “Hampton Court Palace and its car park are within ULEZ, however if you are driving from outside of London into our car park and back out again you will not be seen by the enforcement camera and will not be charged – provided you don’t re-enter the zone.”

A link was included to the TFL site to check whether or not a car meets the emissions standards, and would therefore need to pay the charge.



What would Henry VIII have made of a tax like the ULEZ charge?

in addition to non-Parliamentary “benevolences” he exacted from the wealthy he did impose a tax on all beards, except his own. So maybe the vagaries of ULEZ would have been to His liking.

A Historic Royal Palaces spokesperson said: “Our priority is to continue to provide clear information for visitors, to inform the decisions they make about travel to and from Hampton Court Palace. We will continue to work with TFL to ensure that we provide the most up to date information on this.”

The ULEZ is in force 24 hours a day, midnight to midnight, every day of the year, except for Christmas Day.

According to TfL, nine out of ten cars seen driving in outer London already meet the ULEZ emissions standards.

Since its introduction, TfL said the ULEZ had already helped to reduce nitrogen dioxide pollution by nearly half in central London and by a fifth in inner London.

Several Surrey councils objected to the expansion of the zone, calling for a scrappage scheme to be extended to Surrey residents and for more exemptions.

Related reports:

Signs of Surrey resistance to ULEZ continue

London Mayor confirms drive of ULEZ to Epsom border. ULEZ explainer.

High Court gives ULEZ the green light to Epsom’s borders

ULEZ court challenge begins

ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market

Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds

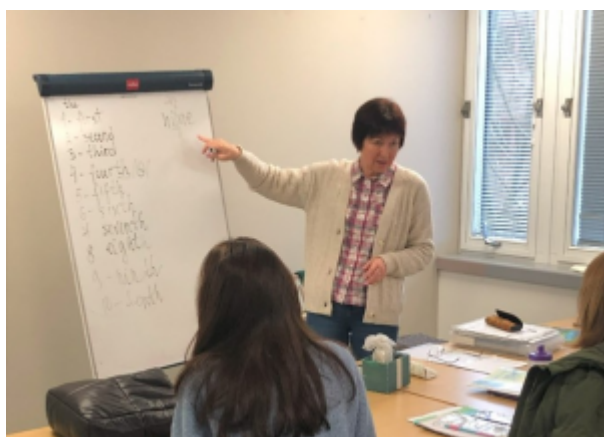
Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge.

ULEZ Court battle looming

Image: Luke Nicolaides CC BY-SA 2.0

Hosts of Ukrainian refugees appreciated

18 September 2023



On the Independence Day of Ukraine - 24th August, **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** offered a huge thank you to more than 60 hosts who have welcomed Ukrainian people into their homes as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and asks anyone who is interested in finding out more about becoming a sponsor to get in touch.

The council, in partnership with **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network** (EERN), has facilitated more than 120 placements in the borough as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme since it began last February.

Galyna, who arrived in the UK from Ukraine in May 2022, said: “When I first arrived in the UK I felt really lost, as I didn’t know anybody or how things worked. I was supported by the Homes from Ukraine team at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council soon after arrival.”

Amanda, one of the borough’s valued hosts, said: “Back in March 2022, we signed up for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and had no idea what we had signed up for, it just seemed like the right thing to do!

“We now have our second set of lovely guests, we know a lot more about the history of Eastern Europe, have negotiated government systems and learnt much about ourselves. We have no regrets and feel very proud to be a part of Homes for Ukraine.”

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said: “I have been overwhelmed by the kindness that people in Epsom & Ewell have shown in welcoming displaced people from Ukraine to our borough.

“Hosts have helped families feel at home in a new place where they may not speak the language, showing them around and helping them feel safe.

“I’d like to say thank you to the many people who have supported efforts to help people in Ukraine, by taking part in the Homes for Ukraine scheme, raising money, or donating money or goods.”

Nicky Marshall, Host Supervisor for EERN, said: “95% of placements work very well. Guest(s) become like members of the family.

“Hosts join the scheme for many different reasons and have fed back that it is enriching and enlightening, giving both parties the chance to learn about a different culture (and sometimes experience a different cuisine!).”

EERN works with Epsom & Ewell Council to support Ukrainians in our borough, providing regular English lessons, helping families navigate school requirements, and aiding people in finding employment, for example putting them in touch with the Epsom & Ewell Employment Hub. EERN also run social events that help Ukrainian guests feel more at home.

Anyone who is interested in finding out about the Homes for Ukraine scheme should email homesforukraine@epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Anyone in the UK who has not been matched with a Ukrainian person or family can record their interest in the scheme, as long as:

- they can offer a spare room or home for at least 6 months
- if not a British citizen, they have leave to remain in the UK for at least 6 months
- they do not have a criminal record.

‘Thank you’ payments: hosts have the option to receive a monthly payment of £350 for up to 12 months, paid in arrears, for as long as they are hosting their guests and the accommodation provided is of a suitable standard. Hosts are eligible for the first monthly payment once the accommodation they are providing has been checked.

Find out more and register interest here: <https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine>

Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network is a registered charity, part of Good Company (Surrey). They operate under a service level agreement with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, supporting Ukrainian families in the borough.

Their website is: <https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org/ukraine-support>