

# MP warns as 3,600 Epsom homes face fuel poverty

4 December 2025



More than 3,600 households in Epsom and Ewell are estimated to be living in fuel poverty this winter, according to new figures that have reignited debate over the Government’s decision to scale back national home-insulation funding.

The estimates come in the same week the Chancellor announced cuts to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme, a long-running programme that funds energy-saving improvements such as insulation in low-income households. Government data indicates ECO has delivered 1,866 installations locally, helping families reduce heat loss from older homes that are often poorly insulated. Local MP Helen Maguire said withdrawing support now would leave “thousands of families in draughty homes and facing high bills” at a time when many residents already feel financially stretched.

Fuel poverty is measured by comparing a home’s required energy costs with household income. National charities warn the UK remains one of the worst-insulated housing stocks in Western Europe, meaning households are more vulnerable to spikes in market energy prices. Despite a fall in wholesale gas costs over the past year, Ofgem confirmed that bills remain significantly above pre-crisis levels, and several support schemes introduced during the 2022–23 energy shock are winding down.

Analysts at the Resolution Foundation have noted that around half of the temporary support announced in the Budget is due to expire within three years. Separate modelling by climate think-tank E3G suggests reducing the scope of ECO could prevent up to a million homes nationwide from receiving insulation improvements over the next four years and may lead to job losses in the retrofit and construction sector.

The Government has argued that its energy efficiency targets remain in place and that the Budget decisions reflect wider fiscal pressures. Ministers say additional measures to stabilise wholesale prices and support low-income households will continue. But campaigners and industry groups have expressed concern that cutting insulation programmes risks higher long-term costs for both consumers and the state, as poorly insulated homes require more energy to heat.

Helen Maguire said residents are already reporting that “they feel poorer by the day” and called on ministers to back a more ambitious national upgrade scheme. The Liberal Democrats are advocating an emergency programme offering free insulation and heat pumps for people on low incomes, alongside removing the Renewables Obligation levy from electricity bills. The party claims that breaking the link between gas and electricity prices and scaling up home retrofit work could halve household energy bills by 2035.

As temperatures fall, local authorities, charities and advice services expect increased demand from households struggling to balance heating costs with other essential spending. Nationally, fuel poverty campaigners continue to urge the Government to treat insulation as an infrastructure priority, warning that winter pressures will persist until the UK’s older housing stock is modernised at scale.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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## Surrey home extension charges aired in Parliament

4 December 2025



“Complex and inflexible” rules that unintentionally and “unfairly penalise” homeowners with six-figure fines “for the apparent crime of building a home extension” will be reexamined, the housing minister has said.

The problem of Community Infrastructure Levy charges being unfairly or disproportionately applied to homeowners has inflicted pain on dozens of Waverley residents with the borough council saying it is tied by Government guidelines on how to enforce the charges.

The charges are supposed to help offset the impact of large scale developments in an area – and help fund the infrastructure to support it.

In Waverley, dozens of homeowners have found themselves inadvertently caught in the tangle of bureaucracy. One resident, Steve Dally was stung with a £70,000 ‘contribution’ with others threatened with imprisonment or having their homes reposessed.

The issue came to a head this week in Parliament with Godalming and Ash MP Sir Jeremy Hunt raising the matter to housing minister Matthew Pennycook.

Sir Jeremy said: “My constituent Steve Dally was charged £70,000 by Liberal Democrat-controlled Waverley borough council for the apparent crime of building a home extension. I met the housing minister earlier this year to talk about abuse of the community infrastructure levy. Could he update the House on his plans to stop it?”

Mr Pennycook told the commons that he agreed there had been a number of “unintended consequences of the 2010 CIL regulations—they have unfairly penalised some homeowners.

“I can only reiterate the commitments I gave him during that meeting. In principle, we are committed to finding a solution to this issue, and I am more than happy to meet him again and update him on the steps we have taken in the interim.”

The news has been welcomed by Waverley Borough Council, which has set up its own discretionary review panel to examine cases of wrongdoing – although uptake has been extremely slow with only two cases coming forward so far.

Councillor Liz Townsend, Waverley Borough Council portfolio holder for planning and economic development said: “We welcome the recent comments made in Parliament by the Housing Minister acknowledging the unintended consequences of the current Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations.

“The legislation is overly complex and inflexible, and like many residents we are frustrated by a system that can leave homeowners facing large bills for genuine

mistakes. We have been pressing the Government for reform for some time, so it is encouraging to hear a clear commitment to finding a solution.

“While national legislation limits what councils can do, we are doing everything possible to support our residents. She added: “The case of Mr Dally, which was raised in Parliament, was one of the situations that highlighted the need for change.

“Following discussions with him, the council reviewed his case and concluded that his CIL charge should be withdrawn and refunded. His experience helped shape the introduction of our Discretionary Review Scheme, so that other residents would have a clear route to request a review.”

The council said it would continue to lobby Government for urgent reform to ensure the CIL system “is clearer, fairer and more proportionate for homeowners” and called for the collaborative work between themselves, Sir Jeremy and ministers “to help shape a fairer and more compassionate system that still supports local infrastructure.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Godalming and Ash MP Sir Jeremy Hunt in parliament raising the issue of CIL injustice (Parliament TV)

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## Epsom MP leads cross-party delegation to Ukraine to examine impact of explosive weapons

4 December 2025



A cross-party delegation of UK Parliamentarians has travelled to Ukraine to assess the humanitarian and environmental impact of explosive weapons and to strengthen cooperation between the two countries on mine clearance and victim support.

The visit was led by **Helen Maguire**, Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Epsom & Ewell and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Explosive Weapons and Their Impact. The group also included Cameron Thomas MP for Tewkesbury and Baroness Natalie Bennett of the Green Party.

During their visit, the delegation met Minister Oleksi Sobolev, responsible for Ukraine’s economy, agriculture and environment, to discuss the challenges of clearing more than 136,000 square kilometres of land now contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance — roughly a third of Ukraine’s territory. They also visited Ukraine’s State Emergency Service, which has responded to over 235,000 explosive incidents since the start of the war, rescuing more than 6,500 people.

The MPs observed mine clearance operations with the HALO Trust and Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and learned about new training programmes in explosive ordnance disposal and emergency response being developed at Lviv State University of Life Safety. They also visited rehabilitation centres Superhumans and Unbroken, which provide prosthetics, surgery, and psychological support to civilians and veterans injured by explosions.

Speaking from Ukraine, Helen Maguire said: “As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Weapons and Their Impact, it has been a privilege to visit Ukraine with cross-party colleagues to observe both the unimaginable devastation caused by explosive weapons, and the extraordinary courage of those working to clear them.” She added “Ukraine faces one of the largest demining challenges in history. Witnessing the bravery of the women and men working to clear this contamination has been deeply humbling. Britain must continue to support the Ukrainian people by championing humanitarian mine action and ensuring our foreign policy reflects the real human cost of explosive weapons.”

Maguire also met **Anatolii Fedoruk**, Mayor of **Bucha**, the town that became a global symbol of Russian atrocities against civilians after the withdrawal of occupying forces in 2022. Hundreds of civilians were killed there, many showing signs of execution and torture. Maguire reflected:

“Witnessing first hand the damage and loss caused by landmines has been sobering, but I’ve been heartened to know that the contributions from my own community — through **Surrey Stands With Ukraine**’s financial support towards rehabilitation for landmine victims — will have made a tangible difference to survivors of these atrocities. I’m proud to represent a constituency whose compassion knows no borders.”

Bucha holds a particular link with Epsom, as the local charity Surrey Stands With Ukraine (SSWU) — based in the town — was among the first UK groups to send aid there following the liberation of the area in 2022. Its director, Lionel Blackman, visited Bucha in July 2025, meeting the Mayor and local officials and other urban centres and aid workers to assess ongoing needs and rehabilitation projects. The charity has delivered more than £4 million worth of humanitarian and medical aid to Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion.

### Global context: Ukraine among the world’s most landmined nations

Ukraine now ranks among the most heavily mined countries on Earth, joining the grim company of Cambodia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Syria. The United Nations and the HALO Trust estimate that contamination across Ukraine affects an area larger than England, Wales, and Northern Ireland combined. At the current pace of clearance, it could take decades to make all affected areas safe.

Globally, Cambodia remains one of the most mine-affected nations, with around 1,000 square kilometres still contaminated despite 30 years of clearance. Vietnam and Laos continue to suffer from the legacy of the Vietnam War, where unexploded ordnance from U.S. bombing campaigns still kills or injures civilians every year. In comparison, Ukraine’s contamination has occurred over a much shorter period — highlighting the devastating intensity of Russia’s use of explosive weapons in civilian areas.

The UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) continues to fund demining organisations in Ukraine through its Global Mine Action Programme, which supports both the HALO Trust and MAG in their life-saving work.

You can follow the work of Surrey Stands With Ukraine and make donations [HERE](#)

Sam Jones - Reporter



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Image: Helen Maguire MP with LibDem Party leader Sir Ed Davey and Surrey Stands With Ukraine Chairman Roy Deadman at the “Ukraine Hub” in Global House (courtesy The Ashley Centre) the HQ for the charity and the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network in November 2024.

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## Not MPs’ expenses again!?

4 December 2025



Some Surrey MPs have racked up thousands of pounds in hotel stays or London rent, despite their constituencies being within commuting distance of Westminster.

The rules allow MPs who live outside London to rent a property or book hotels if late-night votes or early starts make the journey “unreasonable”. Hotel bills are capped at £230 a night in London. But many Surrey residents might see the distances involved as a “normal” daily commute.

According to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), **Zöe Franklin (Liberal Democrat)**, MP for Guildford, has claimed £3,919.42 for 18 nights in London hotels between September 2024 and April 2025 – roughly two stays a month. **Dr Al Pinkerton (Liberal Democrat)**, MP for Surrey Heath, has claimed £4,543 for 22 hotel stays in the same period, including a four-night stint last October costing £780 and five separate nights this April. **Will Forster (Liberal Democrat)**, MP for Woking, spent £367.84 on a two-night stay in February after returning from a parliamentary trip to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, some of their Conservative colleagues have other arrangements. **Greg Stafford (Conservative)**, MP for Farnham and Bordon, has reportedly spent £9,592.52 on accommodation over five months, including nearly £8,000 to rent a London property between November 2024 and March 2025, excluding council tax and utility bills. Travelling from Mr Stafford’s constituency office in Farnham and Bordon takes on average 1 hour 25 minutes by car or 1 hour 50 minutes by train. Mr Stafford has been approached for comment.

Under IPSA rules, MPs can claim expenses for renting or staying in London when parliamentary business requires it. Up to £31,800 a year is available for MPs’ accommodation budgets in such cases.

Other Surrey MPs take a different approach. **Jeremy Hunt (Conservative)**, MP for Godalming and Ash, owns a London property, while **Claire Coutinho (Conservative)**, MP for East Surrey (Tandridge area), has her own London flat. Neither claims rent or hotel expenses.

A spokesperson for Zöe Franklin said: “Zöe has stayed in overnight accommodation in London after late night sittings in Parliament. This is in line with IPSA guidance. Zöe will continue to focus on working hard and delivering for the people of Guildford constituency.”

A spokesperson for Will Forster said: “Will stayed in a London hotel for two nights in February 2025 following his return from Ukraine as part of a parliamentary delegation to mark the third anniversary of the Russian invasion. Debate in the Commons on the following day extended late into the evening.”

A spokesperson for Dr Al Pinkerton said: “As Surrey Heath is classed as an out-of-London constituency, Dr Pinkerton is entitled under IPSA rules to claim accommodation costs in London when parliamentary duties require it. Rather than renting a permanent flat, he has chosen to use hotel accommodation on an occasional basis – for example, when late-night votes or early morning meetings make commuting impractical. This approach provides flexibility and ensures costs remain within IPSA’s set limits. It also enables Dr Pinkerton to maximise his effectiveness as Surrey Heath’s representative by being present and fully engaged in parliamentary business while avoiding unnecessary expenditure.”

Emily Dalton LDRS

From **top left going clockwise**:

1. **Zöe Franklin** (Liberal Democrat, Guildford)
2. **Dr Al Pinkerton** (Liberal Democrat, Surrey Heath)
3. **Greg Stafford** (Conservative, Farnham and Bordon)
4. **Will Forster** (Liberal Democrat, Woking)

Photos from UK Parliament

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## Poll points to further Conservative decline in Surrey

4 December 2025



Reform UK is in line to win its first Surrey seat, according to a major YouGov poll. The survey of 13,000 people’s voting intentions suggests three Surrey MPs would lose their jobs with the Liberal Democrats being the largest beneficiaries in the county – if a General Election was called today.

Nationally, the polls say the United Kingdom is headed for another hung parliament with Reform, the Nigel Farage led party that succeeded UKIP after Brexit, emerging as the largest party. In Surrey voters are leaning a different way.

The three Surrey seats that would switch allegiance would be Spelthorne, Farnham and Bordon, and Godalming and Ash. All three seats are currently held by the Conservatives with Lincoln Jopp, Greg Stafford and Jeremy Hunt projected to lose their jobs as the Tories crumble to just 45 MPs.

Projected to take their places would be two Liberal Democrats and Surrey’s first Reform MP. If the voting patterns held true Dorking and Horley, Woking, Guildford, Esher and Walton, Godalming and Ash, Epsom and Ewell, Surrey Heath, and Farnham and Bordon, would all go to the Liberal Democrats to give them eight MPs.

The Conservatives would hold East Surrey, Reigate, Runnymede and Weybridge, and Windsor, to give them four MPs. While Reform UK with 27 per cent is expected to edge out the Conservatives on 25 per cent and the Liberal Democrats on 20 per cent to win Spelthorne.

Nationally YouGov’s seat-by-seat analysis indicates Reform UK would secure 311 seats in the Commons, short of the 326 required to demand a majority but far and away the largest party – and 306 MPs more than it currently has. The poll has Labour dropping from its 411 landslide victory in 2024 to 144 with the Lib Dems on 78 and the Conservatives which had been in Government for 14 years prior before losing last year would slip to 45 seats.

YouGov says its seat projections come with uncertainty and that volatility is now the norm in British electoral politics. They say Reform UK would win at least 82 seats by less than five percentage points and that there was a possibility it could lose them all, leaving the party well short of a parliamentary majority rather than within touching distance.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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## Epsom and Ewell MP calls for SEND action

4 December 2025



Helen Maguire MP for Epsom and Ewell renewed her call for immediate government action to address the crisis in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, following her attendance at both the *Fight for Ordinary SEND* rally on Parliament Square and the Westminster Hall debate on *Children with SEND: Assessments and Support*, held on 15 September 2025.

At the Parliament Square rally, Ms. Maguire met with parents and carers who shared deeply troubling accounts, including cases in which children appear to have been removed from the register for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), despite ongoing and substantial need. Families also raised concerns about long waiting lists, lack of specialist provision, and inconsistent support from local authorities.

A key piece of evidence cited by rally-attendees relates to new findings from the *Centre for Justice Innovation* (CJI). According to CJI’s literature review and follow-up research:

- A very high proportion of children who are sentenced by criminal courts have identified SEND. For example, one statistic shows that **71%** of children sentenced between April 2019 and March 2020 had identified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- More broadly, children with SEND are significantly overrepresented throughout the youth justice system: amongst those cautioned or sentenced for offences (including serious violence), over **80%** have been recorded as ever having special educational needs; for prolific offenders it’s even higher.
- Barriers to effective diversion have been consistently highlighted: children with communication or learning difficulties are less likely to be diverted out of the formal justice system because their needs are either unrecognised or misinterpreted as behavioural problems.
- The CJI reports that data on SEND in diversion programmes is patchy, with inconsistent recording, varying assessment tools, and a lack of standardisation, which obstructs accountability and improvement.

These findings underline how failures in early identification, assessment, and support not only impact children’s education but may also increase risk of contact with the justice system.

### Westminster Hall Debate & SEND Petition

The Westminster Hall debate *Children with SEND: Assessments and Support* took place, prompted by a petition titled “*Retain legal right to assessment and support in education for children with SEND*”, which attracted over 122,000 signatures. The petition calls on the Government to maintain existing legal protections (including the EHCP process) and improve the timeliness and quality of assessments.

MPs from across parties spoke powerfully about how delays in EHCP assessment, weak enforcement, and underfunding are leaving children and families without vital support. Some remarked on whether changes being mooted to the law may reduce legal guarantees for EHCPs—something campaigners have strongly opposed.

### Case Example from Helen Maguire in Debate

During the debate, Helen Maguire shared a case from her own constituency:

“Four-year-old Maeve lives in my constituency and has cerebral palsy. She requires constant care, is unable to walk, has limited speech and has multiple ongoing medical conditions that require attention. Despite that, and despite the fact that her parents applied to Surrey County Council almost a year ago, the council has refused to even assess her for an EHCP. She started school last week, but still does not have an agreed plan in place.”

This story underlines how delays and refusal to assess are not abstract problems—they are happening now and affecting young children with complex needs.

### What Must Be Done

Helen Maguire is calling on the Government to take the following measures urgently:

1. **Restore and protect the legal rights associated with EHCPs**, ensuring that children who need assessments receive them promptly, and that the process is enforced.
2. **Increase funding** to SEND services and local authorities, especially for specialist care, speech and language therapy, and other supports that are in short supply.
3. **Shorten waiting lists** and reduce the backlog of assessments, so that children are not forced to begin school (or continue schooling) without the plan and support they are legally entitled to.

4. **Ensure better data and transparency**, particularly in diversion and youth justice settings, so the over-representation of SEND children is properly understood and addressed.
5. **Improve training** among professionals in education, local government and justice system sectors so that SEND is identified and accommodated, not misinterpreted as misconduct or behavioural issues.

Helen Maguire MP said: “We are seeing families shattered by delays, by refusals to assess, by thousands of children starting school without the support they clearly need. The statistics show that without early intervention, children with SEND risk falling into a system that is not equipped for them. The Government must act now—not in months, but immediately—on funding, waiting lists, and legal rights. Our children deserve nothing less.”

Sam Jones – Reporter



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## Pavement Parking: Epsom & Ewell MP Speaks Out

4 December 2025



3rd September Helen Maguire, Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, spotlighted in a Parliament debate a pressing local frustration: pavement parking.

### A Daily Struggle on Our Footpaths

Maguire painted a vivid picture of everyday life here in Epsom & Ewell—where pavements are meant to be safe, shared spaces, but too often become obstacles.

According to Guide Dogs UK, four out of five blind or partially sighted people report difficulty walking on pavements at least once a week, and 95% have been forced onto the road because vehicles encroach even slightly. For wheelchair and mobility scooter users, this alarming figure leaps to 99%. Even parents aren’t spared: 87% say they’ve had to step into the road, and 80% would walk their children to school more often if pavements weren’t blocked.

Maguire also revealed a telling local anecdote: on one evening alone, a constituent counted 23 mopeds and motorbikes cluttering a pavement, forcing people into traffic and weaving in and out unpredictably. It’s these small moments that undermine our sense of safety—and, by extension, our freedom.

### The Patchwork of Laws

Here’s the head-scratcher: pavement parking is banned in London (for fifty years) and across Scotland unless your council specifically says otherwise. But elsewhere in England, the rule is reversed: it’s allowed unless a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is put in place—a long, expensive local process.

Driving onto pavements is already illegal under Section 72 of the Highways Act 1835—but, as Helen pointed out, few people even know the finer points of the law. One survey found just 5% of drivers understand all aspects.

### A Consultation Left Hanging—and Growing Frustration

It’s now nearly five years since the government ran a consultation titled *Pavement parking: options for change*, which closed in November 2020. It proposed everything from simplifying the TRO process to introducing a national default ban—but still, there’s been no government response or action. Helen called on ministers to act before the consultation’s fifth anniversary rolls around this autumn.

### Lessons from Closer to Home—and Farther Afield

London and Scotland show what’s possible: clearer rules, better enforcement, safer walking spaces. In Scotland, since the Transport Act 2019 came into force, councils have issued thousands of fines—raising almost £1 million in the process, with Edinburgh alone accounting for around £441,000, and showing that civil enforcement works.

Meanwhile, in England, research from Guide Dogs underscores the human cost—injuries, forced urban detours, isolation—and Living Streets found that 65% of drivers admitted to pavement parking, while 43% had done so in the past six months.

### What It Means for Epsom & Ewell

For our residents—those with visual impairments, mobility challenges, parents with prams—the pavement should be a path to independence, not a blockade.

Maguire’s plea is clear: she wants a national default ban on pavement parking—one that gives the police and councils clarity, hones enforcement, and safeguards community spaces.

### What Could Come Next?

- A national ban as the starting point, with councils able to allow exceptions where needed.
- Proper powers for civil enforcement—think PCNs—not just confusing laws in dusty books.
- A public campaign: educating drivers, building understanding, reducing dangerous impromptu parking.
- Local upgrades to pavements: smoother, wider, safer—so more of us feel confident walking around Epsom & Ewell.

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## Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

4 December 2025



A new analysis of Surrey’s special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision reveals growing concern over spiralling costs, limited local authority capacity, and soaring profits among private providers – all while many children with special needs remain without adequate support.

The situation has drawn particular attention following the release of financial data from companies operating independent special schools across the UK, including in Surrey. The Witherslack Group, which operates Bramley Hill School in Tadworth, reported a turnover of £208 million and an operating profit of £44.6 million this year – up from £172.8 million turnover and £34.8 million profit the year before. Some private providers, backed by private equity firms, have posted profit margins exceeding 20%.

In contrast, Surrey County Council – responsible for delivering education for over 16,000 children in the county with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) – faces an ongoing struggle to balance growing demand against limited state sector capacity. The Council’s own figures show that last year, it spent **£122 million**—almost half of its **£270 million high needs block grant**—on placements at non-maintained and independent schools.

The root of the issue lies in a long-standing shortage of suitable local authority-run SEND schools, which has left the Council heavily reliant on private sector provision. That reliance has come at a cost, both financial and human. According to Council data, **1,809 children in Surrey were recorded as being out of school for over a third of the time during the 2023/24 academic year**. Campaigners and parents report delays in assessments, a lack of transparency in placement decisions, and limited accountability from some providers.

The County Council has committed to increasing in-county SEND provision. Its **SEND Capital Programme**, launched in 2020, aims to create **1,500 new maintained school places by 2030**, with hundreds already in development. But critics argue progress is too slow, and that excessive profits among private providers are draining funds that could otherwise support local services.

Surrey’s six Liberal Democrat MPs – Al Pinkerton, Chris Coghlan, Helen Maguire, Monica Harding, Will Forster, and Zöe Franklin – have now called for a **legal cap on profits** made by private SEND providers. They propose a maximum margin of **8%**, aligning with figures cited by the Office for National Statistics for average business profitability. The same threshold has also been suggested by the Education Secretary in the context of children’s social care reform.

In a joint statement, the MPs said:

“It is completely unacceptable that the top private SEND providers in Surrey are lining their pockets by exploiting a system that has been left in crisis by repeated failures from the Conservatives. Supporting places at non-maintained independent schools accounted for £122 million last year – money that could go further in public provision.”

“We are deeply concerned to see this greedy profiteering from private equity firms, especially when parents across Surrey are raising serious concerns about standards and support at some schools, including Bramley Hill.”

Surrey County Council has not commented directly on the profit figures but continues to highlight its strategic commitment to invest in new local SEND places. Its latest SEND Partnership Strategy focuses on co-producing services with families, improving timely access to support, and reducing reliance on high-cost placements. However, significant financial risks remain. In February, the Council acknowledged its high needs block deficit was continuing to grow, even with Government intervention schemes such as the “Safety Valve” programme.

Meanwhile, media scrutiny continues to follow the role of private companies in special education nationally. The BBC recently investigated complaints involving private SEND schools, and MPs including Monica Harding have raised questions in Parliament about accountability and off-rolling practices.

Parents and campaigners across Surrey continue to call for stronger regulation, more timely provision, and long-term investment in inclusive education. As one parent told *EET*: “We need a system that puts children first – not shareholders.”

Image: cc Bruce Matsunaga. Licence details

## Assisted Dying Bill Passes in Commons – Epsom MP Explains Absence

4 December 2025



In a historic moment for UK parliamentary debate, the Assisted Dying Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on **Friday 20 June 2025**, following a narrow but decisive vote. MPs voted **314 in favour** and **291 against**, a margin of just 23 votes, paving the way for the Bill’s progression to the House of Lords.

The **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**, introduced by Labour MP Kim Leadbetter, proposes to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales who are medically expected to live for six months or less. Under the Bill’s framework, individuals would be able to request life-ending medication, to be self-administered following a rigorous process of approvals.

That process would require sign-off by two independent doctors and a special three-member oversight panel comprising a legal expert, psychiatrist, and social worker. Earlier provisions for High Court authorisation were removed in the final draft to streamline implementation, a move both welcomed and criticised in equal measure.

Supporters of the Bill argue that it reflects modern values around personal autonomy and compassionate end-of-life care, allowing individuals the dignity of choosing how and when they die. They point to robust safeguards within the Bill — including mental capacity assessments, a residency requirement, and a mandatory waiting period — as protections for vulnerable people. Medical professionals would retain the right to opt out on grounds of conscience.

Opponents, including some religious leaders and palliative care specialists, argue that the Bill could open the door to pressure on the elderly, disabled or chronically ill to end their lives prematurely. They also warn that overstretched NHS and social care services might struggle to implement the regulatory

framework effectively.

Among those unable to cast their vote was Epsom and Ewell’s Liberal Democrat MP, **Helen Maguire**, who has consistently supported the Bill in previous readings. Ms Maguire issued the following full statement to the *Epsom and Ewell Times* explaining her absence:

“I am disappointed to have been unable to attend the vote. I have consistently voted for this Bill.

My absence on the voting date of Friday, June 20th, was due to a pre-planned parliamentary trip. This visit was scheduled before the voting date was confirmed and unfortunately could not be moved.

This is an issue I care about profoundly, and I gave serious thought as to whether I should be away. In the end, I was paired with another MP who was unable to attend as they hold a different view from me, which meant that our absences effectively cancelled each other out in terms of the final result.

While this did offer some reassurance to my conscience, I appreciate that my absence may still be disappointing to those who had hoped to see a vote recorded in person. Please know that I have made it a priority to attend all other sitting Fridays when the assisted dying bill was debated, precisely because of how important I know these debates and votes are, particularly on such sensitive and personal matters.”

With the Bill now heading to the House of Lords for further scrutiny, attention turns to whether peers will support what could become one of the most significant moral and legal reforms in recent decades. While some in the Lords remain sceptical, others are warning against frustrating legislation that has cleared the elected chamber by a democratic vote.

Whether or not the Bill survives its passage through the Lords, the June 20th vote represents a shift in the national conversation — one that brings the UK a step closer to joining countries like Canada, New Zealand, and parts of the United States in legalising assisted dying under carefully controlled conditions.

## MP Slams ‘Patchwork Repairs’ as local Hospitals Face £150m Backlog

4 December 2025



Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, Helen Maguire, has criticised the government’s response to the mounting repair crisis at Epsom and St Helier hospitals, warning that the very future of local NHS services could be at risk without urgent and substantial investment.

Speaking in the House of Commons this week, Maguire welcomed a recent £12.1 million allocation for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust but described the sum as “a drop in the ocean” compared to the scale of need.

“Our current maintenance backlog alone amounts to £150 million,” states the St George’s, Epsom and St Helier Hospital Group (GESH), which manages the trust. “We estimate our backlog maintenance will rise by £180 million over five years — or £36 million per year.”

During Health and Social Care Questions in Parliament on 17 June, Maguire challenged Health Secretary Wes Streeting to visit the hospitals and witness conditions firsthand. “Patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities, not patchwork repairs,” she told MPs.

Read the full exchange in Hansard

The Health Secretary acknowledged the scale of the challenge, saying both he and the Minister for Secondary Care, Karin Smyth MP, had met with local MPs about the issue. He cited a £207 million capital allocation to the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board — covering the broader region — and reiterated that the government was “reversing the trend” of underinvestment, blaming the previous Conservative government for leaving “a £37 billion black hole in NHS capital.”

However, Maguire was left unimpressed by the response.

“It is disappointing that the Health Secretary ignored my invitation to come down and see firsthand the scale of the challenge at Epsom & St Helier,” she said after the debate.

“If he spent a day in the shoes of one of our exceptional doctors or nurses, caring for patients amidst crumbling walls and leaking ceilings, I’m sure he too would share the grave concerns that I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues Bobby Dean MP and Luke Taylor MP have for our local hospitals.

“£12.1 million does not even begin to touch the sides compared with what our hospitals need right now.”

The MP also stressed the importance of not placing all hope in the new specialist emergency care hospital planned for Sutton. “Alongside the new hospital building in Sutton to ease the pressure on Epsom & St Helier, patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities wherever they go, not just patchwork repairs and more uncertainty from this Government.”

### A Local Crisis in Numbers

- **£150 million** – current maintenance backlog at Epsom & St Helier Trust
- **£36 million/year** – projected additional maintenance need over next five years
- **£12.1 million** – recent government funding allocated to the Trust
- **£207 million** – total capital funding to South West London Integrated Care Board

### Background: New Hospital, Old Buildings

Plans for a new £500 million specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton — part of the controversial Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) 1 scheme — have been met with both cautious optimism and concern that core services in Epsom and St Helier will be reduced.

Epsom and St Helier hospitals serve an ageing population, and the majority of the estate dates back to the early to mid-20th century. Campaigners have long pointed to leaking roofs, outdated infrastructure, and chronic staff shortages as urgent priorities.

While some capital funding is being made available for immediate safety needs, campaigners and local MPs argue that unless major investment is directed to the existing hospitals, they will continue to deteriorate, placing patients and staff at risk.

Photo: Maguire MP abseiling St Helier Hospital