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Dorah May Hancock prepares to retire after eleven years supporting Epsom and Ewell's older residents

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A face you never fail to see at all Epsom and Ewell community and charity events.

Dorah May Hancock is preparing to retire after more than eleven years as Chief Officer of Age Concern Epsom & Ewell, looking back on a role built around friendships, community spirit and helping older residents feel less alone.

During her time with the independent local charity, she has helped launch activities, develop partnerships and organise fundraising, working alongside staff, volunteers, businesses and community groups across the borough. A date for her departure has yet to be fixed, with the charity preparing to recruit her successor.

"People often joke that I know everyone, and perhaps I do!" she said. "My job has brought me into contact with so many amazing people across Epsom & Ewell."

Having previously worked for another local charity, Dorah May has become a familiar face to many residents. But it is getting to know the people using Age Concern's services that she describes as one of the greatest pleasures of the job.

"Getting to know our clients has been one of the real joys of the job. Older people have so many stories to tell and so much experience to share, and it's a privilege to be part of a charity that helps them feel connected and valued."

Bringing people together

Among the highlights of her time at the charity was the Golden Days Festival, marking its 70th anniversary and celebrating both its history and the older residents at the heart of its work.

Another achievement has been the creation of the In Memory Woodland at Long Grove Park, Epsom, providing somewhere to remember loved ones while creating a green legacy for the community.

Dorah May is particularly proud of launching the Men's Club, offering older men an opportunity to enjoy a meal and a drink, chat and build friendships.

Other activities have brought together people of different generations. Families have enjoyed the Easter Egg Trail, runners have raised funds through the Hogsmill 5, and businesses and volunteers have collected, wrapped and delivered Christmas presents to older residents who might otherwise feel lonely or isolated.

"Our volunteers are equally special, giving so generously of their time and care," she said. "Building relationships with local businesses, organisations and others in the charity community has also been a real pleasure. There is always something happening, and it's wonderful to see how many people want to get involved and help others."

The hardest moments have been the deaths of older people she had come to know, alongside the departure of longstanding volunteers who had given so much to the charity.

Almost eighty years of local support

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell will mark its 80th anniversary in 2027. It began in 1947 as the Old People's Welfare Committee, operating from a small office in Ashley House with a single volunteer. It became the Association for the Elderly in 1971 and adopted its present name in 1982.

Today, its work includes information and advice, befriending, transport to medical appointments, social activities and practical help, supporting older people to remain connected and independent.

Looking ahead, Dorah May hopes the charity's contribution will continue to be recognised and supported as local government changes bring the borough into the new East Surrey authority. She pays tribute to its staff, more than 180 volunteers, and the residents and businesses who help sustain its work.

Family time ahead

Retirement will also bring a new family chapter. With her son and his fiancée expecting a baby boy in the New Year, Dorah May is looking forward to "lots of cuddles and family joy", while continuing to be involved in the community.

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In her message announcing her plans, she thanked supporters for their commitment: “We have the most wonderful community spirit in E&E and the time and commitment of so many people has been invaluable.”

She added: “Leaving a job that I am so passionate about will be sad but I know that with such dedicated staff, volunteers and engagement from our wonderful community my successor will take the helm and lead our amazing local independent charity which makes such a difference to our older community.”

Lionel Blackman

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