

# Friendly finding puts Epsom and Ewell in England's top fifth

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Epsom and Ewell has been ranked among the friendliest and most connected places in England in a new national index examining the strength of community life.

The borough placed 56th out of 296 local authority areas on the National Conversation's Connection Barometer, giving it a score of 71.2 out of 100 and an "A" grade.

That puts Epsom and Ewell comfortably inside England's top fifth and fourth highest among Surrey's 11 boroughs and districts. Waverley was ranked 13th nationally, Mole Valley 21st and Elmbridge 23rd.

The results attracted national attention after The Guardian reported that the Isles of Scilly had been named England's friendliest place. The islands were followed by South Hams, West Devon, Derbyshire Dales and the nearby London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

However, the description of the findings as a vote for England's "friendliest" places needs some qualification. Residents were not simply asked to rate the friendliness of their towns and neighbours.

Instead, the barometer combines eight measures taken from the Government's Community Life Survey 2024/25. Each council area was ranked against the other 295 areas on every measure, with those rankings averaged to produce a score out of 100.

The Epsom and Ewell figures were:

- 4.6% said they felt lonely often or always;
- 65.7% felt strongly that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood;
- 48.4% believed many people in their neighbourhood could be trusted;
- 85.6% agreed that people from different backgrounds got on well together;
- 70.1% were proud to live in their local area;
- 69.1% chatted to their neighbours at least once a month;
- 20.1% undertook formal volunteering at least once a month; and
- 37.5% had participated in civic activities during the previous 12 months.

The borough performed particularly strongly on civic participation, volunteering, local pride and relations between people from different backgrounds. Its relatively low reported level of frequent loneliness also contributed positively to the overall score.

The findings provide statistical support for the familiar picture of Epsom and Ewell as a borough sustained by residents' associations, charities, sports clubs, faith groups, heritage organisations and other voluntary bodies.

There are nevertheless reasons for treating precise league-table positions cautiously. The Government survey estimates come with margins of error, meaning small differences between neighbouring positions may not be statistically significant.

The barometer itself describes its score as a "rough guide, not a final measure". Its eight indicators are given equal weight and cannot capture every aspect of living in a particular community. The survey also covers the whole borough, so it does not reveal whether experiences differ between individual neighbourhoods.

The Community Life Survey questioned adults aged 16 and over between October 2024 and March 2025. A larger sample in 2023/24 and 2024/25 allowed the Government to publish meaningful estimates for individual local authority areas.

The index was produced by the secretariat of the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion to support the wider National Conversation, a UK-wide exercise examining what connects and divides people.

The Commission is co-chaired by former Conservative Home Secretary Sir Sajid Javid and former Labour MP Jon Cruddas. It has brought together representatives from politics, academia, business, faith and civil society to consider growing

concerns about social isolation, division and the weakening of community institutions.

The National Conversation explained that official statistics provide only part of the picture and that the index was intended to prompt discussion about whether the figures reflect people's lived experiences.

Its public survey closed on 31st August. The findings are expected to contribute to a report by the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion later in 2026.

At the opposite end of the barometer, Barking and Dagenham ranked 296th, below Stoke-on-Trent, Ashfield, Mansfield and Ipswich.

For Epsom and Ewell, 56th place is not quite a claim to being England's single friendliest community. It does, however, provide encouraging evidence that neighbourliness, civic involvement and local pride remain notable strengths of the borough.

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