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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Surrey needs more foster carers

7 November 2024



Fostering can mean everything to those involved; that is the message of a powerful new fostering film from over 100 councils.

'Everything', a new fostering recruitment film, will have its Surrey premier at a private screening and fostering information session at Nova Cinema, Woking, on Thursday 14 November.

As well as celebrating our existing community of Surrey foster carers, the event will offer residents who may be considering fostering the opportunity to learn all about the fostering journey. A panel discussion with foster carers, care experienced young people and fostering staff will provide the opportunity for questions, as well as to hear directly from those with first-hand experience of the power becoming a foster carer has to transform lives. Not just those of children being fostered, but of the foster carers and their families too.

Highlighting the need for more foster carers in Surrey, **Councillor Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning**, said;

"At Surrey County Council we have over 1,000 children in our care and we currently have just under 400 foster families. We want children to live and thrive in homes within the county, where this is in the right thing for them. While 42% of fostered children in Surrey live with our foster carers within the geographical borders of the county, our aim is that by 2030 that number will be up to 65%.

"The 'Everything' project has given our fostering service an amazing film that shows the long-term impact that fostering can have, with relationships between carers and children lasting well into adulthood. Every council wants to recruit more foster carers, and by collaborating to produce this emotionally powerful film, we can show people how rewarding and life-changing being a foster carer can be.

"The message is the same for all of us – we need more people to step forward and become foster carers. 'Everything' will help us to reach more people in our communities and encourage them to find out more about this really rewarding role.

"We are committed to giving the vulnerable children and young people we care for the best chance to thrive, and for the vast majority of them that would be to live with a local fostering family. Our ambition is for at least 30 new foster families across Surrey to join us by the end of March 2025."

Children who enter the care system have often experienced trauma and instability in their lives, and a caring, stable foster family can make a significant difference in their wellbeing and development.

Nationally, there are currently over 70,000 children living with around 56,000 foster families in the UK. However, there is still a significant shortage of foster carers, with around 9,265 new foster families needed in the next year alone.

To learn more about fostering for Surrey, **register online for your free place** at our fostering information session on 14 November, or visit **Fostering – Surrey County Council**.

The 'Everything' film

'Everything' is the seventh film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering. The 'Everything' project is the largest collaboration yet, with participants from Cumbria to Devon and Lancashire to Essex.

'Everything' follows foster carer Mike and his family on a journey through time with two of the children they have looked after, who are now adults. A surprise 60th birthday party for Mike gives Will and Zara a chance to reflect on how being fostered made a difference to their lives, thanking him for everything.

Thanks to footage shot on a genuine old camcorder, we are taken to the 1990s, to see how Will settles into the family. We also jump back to the 2010s, when a young Zara is being taught to play the guitar by Mike, something that comes full circle when she performs a song at the party. Mike's son Chris is involved throughout, showing the important role the children of foster carers play.

The concluding message of the film is that what you do with your life could forever change someone else's – encouraging people to foster in order to make that change.

The film was developed with the input and insight of foster carers and people with care experience, was produced by Reel TwentyFive and project managed by public sector media partner CAN/Rachel Brown. Project Director, Rachel Brown describes the main message of the film: *"Many people don't realise how common it is for relationships made through fostering to last well beyond the 'official' caring role. This has a huge impact on the lives of those who have been fostered, giving them stability and security well into adulthood.*

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"We also wanted to reflect how the children of foster carers make a difference to children when they come into care, helping them to feel part of the family.

"Having over 100 councils taking part in the project, the film will reach a very wide audience, encouraging people to find out more and take the steps towards becoming a foster carer.

"Fostering with your local council or children's trust means you can better support local children and young people who need a safe and nurturing home where they can grow and thrive."

Sarah Thomas, chief executive of the Fostering Network says: *"The Fostering Network has been proud to support the collaborative film projects since 'Giants' in 2017. It's great to see local authority fostering services pooling resources to produce another amazing film. 'Everything' will help to amplify their message about the chronic shortage of fostering households, encouraging more people to come forward and foster."*

Epsom and Ewell remembers

7 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce that Remembrance Day memorial services, parades and activities will take place to honour those who have died in the service of their country and give thanks to those past and present from the armed forces. Formal Acts of Remembrance commenced with the annual opening of the Garden of Remembrance at Bourne Hall Park on Wednesday 6 November.

The Garden is now open to the public until the end of November, giving people the opportunity to take time and reflect.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, the Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and local schoolchildren officially opened the Garden of Remembrance. Children performed songs and poems and placed poppy tokens to honour and remember all those who have died in the service of their country.

Other Remembrance Day activities

Large poppies, kindly donated by the Royal British Legion, have been placed in Epsom High Street, Ewell High Street and Stoneleigh Broadway alongside other poppies placed around the borough.

Events and activities also taking place around the borough will include the following.

Saturday 9 November 2024
The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, and Chair of the Royal British Legion will carry out many acts of Remembrance around the borough. These will include thanking poppy sellers at different sites, wreath laying including at the War Memorial in Ashley Road, Epsom, and joining a Remembrance Day procession that starts at the Army Reserve Centre and ends at St Mary's Church in Ewell.

Remembrance Sunday: 10 November 2024
At 10:33 am, the Clergy, Mayor, Councillors and the Royal British Legion will lead a formal procession from the Army Reserve Centre to St Mary's Church in Ewell, this will be followed by wreath laying and a Remembrance Day service at the monument in the churchyard.
Armistice Day Service (11/11/11): Monday 11 November 2024
Members of the public are invited to join a ceremony at the Clock Tower at 10:40am in Epsom Market Place. The Mayor, Chief Executive and elected Councillors will join the Royal British Legion, armed forces, veterans and local schools at the service whicht ends with observation of the nationwide Two Minute Silence at 11am.

For more information on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Remembrance Day activities – Remembrance in the borough of Epsom & Ewell | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Jackie King, Chief Executive said "This poignant occasion provides us all with the time to reflect and think about those who have served their country, those who have paid the ultimate price with their lives, and those who continue to bravely serve in the armed forces. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them."

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There is another way to save Epsom’s Green Belt

7 November 2024



Dear Editor,

My 12 year old son spoke at the last local council planning meeting, about the importance of not building on the green belt, and I am writing to you, as an Epsom and Ewell Stamford ward resident, to echo my agreement. I’ve gone through the Land Assessment and the Draft Local Plan regulation 18, and am very concerned about the future of our green spaces in Epsom and Ewell.

While I realise there are many ways to work out how many houses to build in Epsom and Ewell, I believe it should be based on how much brownfield space we have, rather than what is possible if we build on the green belt. We obviously need to build social houses (my understanding is that there are about 1,300 families on the waiting list in Epsom and Ewell), and we must do our part with helping to build a proportion of the houses likely to be needed nationally (which the office of national statistics estimates at about a 10% increase over 15 years). The local plan suggests an increase of about 14.5% (on top of 1,300 needed for social houses), so arguably more than we need to build.

I believe an alternative local plan has been sent to the council showing that it is possible to build all the houses we need on brownfield sites identified in the Land Assessment, plus there will be more spaces that become available over the next 15 years. This means that there are no exceptional circumstances in order to justify changing green belt boundaries.

A Reigate and Banstead Green Party councillor, who is also a town planner, gave a talk earlier in the year explaining that if you build on many small brownfield sites (instead of thousands of houses on one green site), you get small, local firms tendering for the work, instead of big developers, so increasing local employment.

I am also concerned that the council is not listening to residents, with their own consultation showing that 87% of respondents are opposed to building on the green belt. And a 12,000 signature petition has been ignored. While I realise there was a concern that not all the people who signed it definitely live in Epsom and Ewell, I think it is very likely that a huge proportion of them do.

Additionally, I feel I cannot leave out how disappointed I am that the Local Plan does not specify energy standards to be met for residential house building. I believe the excuse /explanation for this is the 2022 Local Plan Viability Assessment, which includes some analysis of estimated additional costs to building if various environmental standards are adhered to. I believe that this data is incomplete as it isn’t clear whether it considers the lower cost of running an energy efficient house and the resulting potential impact in the sale price of the property. It also doesn’t compare these figures to the cost of retro-fitting houses, and doesn’t mention the financial cost to the country if we fail to protect ourselves against the worse effects of climate change.

With not acting to remove green belt following the consultation, and dragging the process out, we are now at a point where if we delay any longer, new government rules will mean drastically higher number of houses required to be built in Epsom and Ewell, and could almost wipe out all the green spaces (except The Common) over the next 15 years. Please act quickly to avoid this!

And I cannot stress enough to please remember the importance of increasing green and re-wilded spaces across the UK in order to help mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis. Green spaces are needed for free and natural carbon sequestration, reducing air pollution, natural flood management, and for our declining wildlife. They are also used as important community spaces, and children’s’ sports, as my son and his friend pointed out in the last planning meeting.

Yours faithfully,

Yvonne Grunwald – Stamford Ward Epsom.

Case for dog-walker regulation after death-mauling

7 November 2024



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A coroner has raised concerns about the “lack of regulation”, both locally and nationally, after a professional dog walker was mauled to death in a Surrey park. Natasha Johnston, 28, had been walking eight dogs in Gravelly, Caterham, when she was fatally attacked on January 12, 2023.

Senior Surrey coroner Richard Travers found that Ms Johnston died of shock and haemorrhage to her neck from a “vicious dog attack”. She also had multiple penetrating dog bites to the neck, arms and torso which would have also resulted in her death, the coroner said.

Mr Travers said the “lack of regulation” on controlled dog walking was a “matter of concern” on a national level and there is a risk of other deaths in the future. He addressed his Prevention of Future Deaths report to the Home Secretary, as well as the CEO of Surrey County Council.

Ms Johnston had walked a large number of dogs before, and had walked some of the same dogs previously without difficulty, the inquest heard. In his conclusion of the inquest, on October 21, Mr Travers said Ms Johnston “appeared to have some control” over the eight dogs she was walking.

But, he added, “it was readily apparent that as time went by that any such control was lost, eventually with a tragic result.” Taking account of the number and size of the dogs, the coroner said Ms Johnston’s “inability to control and to hold [the dogs] was not surprising.”

Evidence was presented at the inquest that there is some guidance available as to the maximum number of dogs a person should walk on their own in a public place. However, Mr Travers expressed concern there is “no actual restriction” on the number or size of dogs that a person can walk on their own in a public place, either locally or nationally.

Mr Johnston passed numerous dog walkers, pedestrians and a couple of horse riders on her walk. At first in control, the coroner described how the dogs became “increasingly excited” and disorderly.

Two of the dogs reportedly ran towards two horses, frightening them, and causing one to bolt, with the rider thrown to the ground. After this, one of the larger dogs began scaring a smaller dog that was being walked by its owner. On picking up her dog, the owner was then bitten in her left buttock by the larger dog, “causing severe pain and injury”, the inquest heard.

By the time of the last two incidents, the dogs were no longer in Ms Johnston’s control. She was discovered by a walker, lying at the bottom of a steep slope “covered in blood and with a large number of puncture wounds”, according to the report.

Some Surrey councils have adopted new dog walking rules in 2024. Reigate and Banstead council is the latest local authority to have mandated a new four dog limit for dog walkers or face a fine. Surrey County Council has also introduced a new code of conduct for walkers which asks walkers to only take six pets at a time.

Image: Surrey Coroner\’s Court, Woking. Taken by LDR

Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

7 November 2024



Last Friday saw the return of a singular missing hospital record book. The book contains the medical case book of women admitted to The Manor Hospital between 19 May 1900 and 11 July 1901. This was one of five psychiatric hospitals established by the London County Council at Horton near Epsom at the start of the twentieth century. A treasure trove for family and social historians, the volume records the names, family details and medical notes of 250 London women living with a range of mental illness, with their photographic portraits fixed to its fragile pages. These poignant records allow a precious glimpse of the lives and experiences of women admitted to these vast Victorian pauper asylums. Julian Pooley of the Surrey History Centre rescued many of The Manor’s records after its closure in 1995, case book number 4 was not among them. It’s discovery in an attic in the London Borough of Kingston gives hope that other missing records from Surrey’s former mental and learning disability hospitals may yet come to light.

The couple who found the book in their attic realised its significance when watching Gemma Collins discover her family’s mental health history in a recent episode of ‘Who Do You Think You Are’. Having read the case histories and been fascinated by the patient photographs, they got in touch with **Epsom** based charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery.

Lead researcher for the charity, **Kevin McDonnell** said: “”This discovery of *Manor Asylum – Case Book No. 4* is of immense historical value, especially for our project. I’m grateful to you for preserving it. It will now find a home at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, where it will be accessible to our team of volunteer genealogical researchers. This document is critical to our mission to protect **Horton Cemetery in Epsom**, where nearly 9,000 unclaimed mental health patients were laid to rest between 1899 and 1955. These graves, left unmarked and forgotten, tell stories that we’re

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working to bring back to life. The cemetery, sadly, has been neglected and mistreated since it was sold to a property speculator in 1983. It's a disgraceful situation for such a sacred resting place, now overgrown and scattered with rubble, and this important find helps highlight the significance of the lives laid to rest there."

Surrey History Centre was delighted to find that it filled such an important gap in the surviving records. Now preserved in the History Centre's strong rooms, it can be made publicly available for research and a range of community engagement projects.

Epsom & Ewell consults on anti-social behaviour

7 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is calling on the public to take part in their consultation about a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) from 4 November. The consultation will run for 8 weeks and ends on 5 January.

PSPOs deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a specific area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by putting restrictions on how people can use public spaces in that area. They are intended to help ensure that the everyone can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour.

The consultation will help shape the future of our alcohol-related PSPO, with the public having a say on whether to renew the existing PSPO and extend its reach through the proposed changes.

Proposed changes include expanding the geographical area the PSPO covers to include the entire borough and, in partnership with Surrey Police, to provide additional community support to help counteract antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

The proposed new prohibitions in the PSPO include:

- Harassing or intimidating residents, businesses or members of the public.
- Threatening any person with violence and/or being verbally abusive towards any person.
- Urinating in an open public place.
- Littering or spitting with the intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide their identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour.
- Acting, or inciting others to act, in an anti-social manner, which is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Joining or remaining in a group of two or more people, which is acting in a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Consumption of alcohol following a verbal warning by an authorised person to stop. An authorised person includes a Police Constable, Police Community Support Officer, a Council Officer, or any other person authorised by the Council.

Councillor Shanice Goldman, Chair of Crime and Disorder Committee said:

"Our council is deeply committed to ensuring that public spaces across the borough are safe and welcoming for everyone. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) allow police and council staff to address antisocial behaviour effectively, without immediately resorting to arrests.

"We're seeking feedback from all residents, workers, and visitors to get a clear understanding of whether the proposed changes will better support the police and council in managing antisocial behaviour.

"I really do encourage your participation as your views will help shape our approach to creating safer, more enjoyable spaces for all."

The consultation survey is available here – Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Public Consultation.

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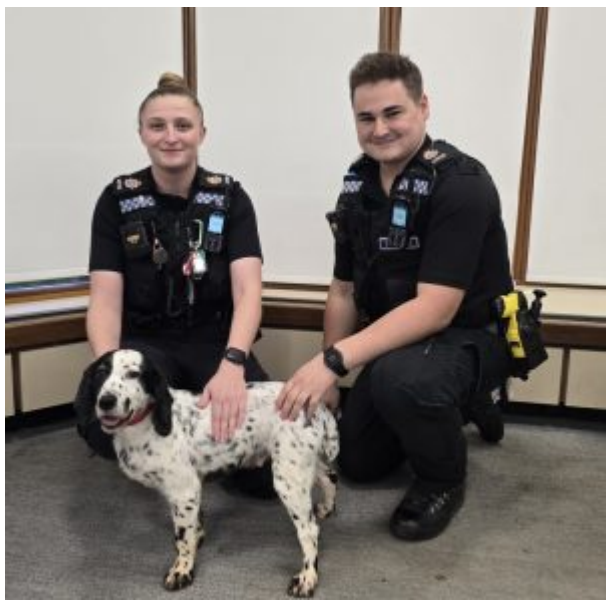
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Stolen dog recovered by Surrey Police after 8 years

7 November 2024



After eight long years, a gorgeous Cocker Spaniel called Daisy, who was stolen from her home in Mole Valley back in 2016, has now been reunited with her owners.

Daisy, who was one at the time, was stolen along with three other dogs in November 2016, after thieves took the working gun dogs from the garden kennels they were housed in.

Tragically one of the dogs was killed after being hit by a car as it tried to escape and the other two stolen dogs have never been located, despite best efforts from officers.

In a surreal turn of events, and nearly eight years to the day since Daisy was taken, officers were alerted on Tuesday 29 October, that someone had tried to update her microchip details. Our rural crime officer PC Laura Rowley immediately contacted the microchip company to obtain the details of the new owners.

Just two days later officers from the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood team completed a three hour round trip to bring Daisy back to Surrey and her owners. They said, “Daisy had been rehomed in good faith by the new owners and they were unaware of the theft of Daisy.

“We brought Daisy, who is now slightly deaf, back to the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood Team Office and there was not a dry eye in the house when she was reunited with her owners. She recognised them immediately and stuck to them like glue!”

Sadly, the other dogs, Tilly a black working Cocker Spaniel, and Storm a patchy white Patterdale Terrier, remain missing and are believed to be elderly or have possibly passed away due to their age at the time of the theft. However, if you have any information that may be relevant, please contact us quoting PR/45160097926.

Pictured with Daisy are PC Ewan Keen and PC Ellen Francis.

Epsom & Ewell FC drowned out by Sheerwater

7 November 2024

Epsom and Ewell 0-3 Sheerwater. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South Saturday 2nd November 2024

On a very mild Saturday afternoon at the KGF Salts fans were hoping for fireworks against Sheerwater, and indeed they started off like a rocket. However, rockets have a tendency to tail off very badly, and long before the end it had fizzled out completely as a 3-0 defeat handed the Sheers their sixth straight win over our boys.

In recent weeks we have won some and lost some, while we have also drawn a great many. However, in all of the matches we remained competitive, which regrettably was not the case in this contest against a clinical visiting team. We started well enough, before the opposition scored a couple of goals and then shut us out for the remainder of the match; scoring a third goal towards the end to rub salt into the wounds. By the end we looked quite disheartened against one of the few teams that had actually been below us in the table before kick off, which is concerning ahead of our big F.A. Vase match next weekend. In fact, the second half was most definitely the worst forty-five minute period we have produced for weeks.

In front of an “official” attendance of 106, which contained around twenty non-paying spectators from our young Colts teams, we made a number of changes, many of which were enforced. In goal Faebian Witter came in for the suspended

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Dan O'Donovan, and if you like your stats, this marked the first time in forty years to my knowledge where a goal keeper played against us in one match, only to then turn out for us in our very next match! For those wondering, it was Andy Abel who played so well for Addlestone & Weybridge against us in a pair of Surrey Senior Cup ties, that our Manager Adrian Hill signed him up for our remaining League matches in 1983/84! Also suspended was Niall Stillwell, while Adam Green also missed out after picking up five bookings this season. Green currently faces a further suspension from next Saturday and on the evidence of this match we will miss him badly, although there may be an opening for him as a cheerleader as he was doing a good job of directing the singing for the Colts behind the goal! Finally, in the opposition line up was former Salt Joel Onu, who would join the match from the bench later.

The visitors took the field in a quite frankly vomit-inducing combination of various shades of purple! On a bobbly looking surface that looked like it needed mowing, we started well and should have taken the lead in the 11th minute when Ali Fofahan pulled the ball back from the left wing, only for Kailan North to miskick the ball just eight yards out in a central position. Fofahan's next delivery was a little too close to Fabio Suarez who punched the ball clear, but we were well on top at this stage.

However, the pattern of the match changed completely in the 17th minute when Sheerwater made their first foray into Epsom territory and won a corner, but we didn't deal with this at all well and the far post delivery was headed back across goal by Liam Avery for Harvey Valter to head in from close range, with neither of the players being marked at all. Three minutes later it was two-nil as Elliott York sent a dipping shot at goal from outside the penalty area and Witter was unable to keep it out as the ball went to his left.

From this point Sheerwater made it clear that they were going to stick with what they had. Suarez slowed the game down with the referee complicit in allowing this to happen. However, the defenders in front of him were defending heroically, throwing themselves in front of every shot we sent towards the visiting goal. The first block came from a Will Kendall free kick, which was blocked out wide to Carl Oblitey, who then sent in a great cross that Kendall rose to meet with a header that clipped the crossbar and went out for a goal kick. Moments later another attack was met by a piledriver from Toby Young, but another great defensive block was enough to divert the shot just over the bar. As half time approached North also saw his shot blocked and Fofahan saw his shot bounce down and over the bar. As we went off at half time, it was hard to believe that we hadn't scored, having had a significant majority of possession and chances.

We started the second half rapidly and almost had a goal back in the first fifteen seconds when Fofahan's low ball across goal was wildly miskicked by a defender and went through to Kendall, but our man clearly hadn't been expecting the present and snatched at the ball, slicing it wide from twelve yards. What we didn't realise after fifty minutes of creating chances, was that this one would represent our last real opportunity in the match. The visitors started to shut us out of the game, almost as if they had seen what we had got, and decided that we weren't hurting them. Anthony Nazareth picked up a yellow card for a challenge that looked more clumsy than malicious, and it was possible that he also injured himself at the time as he was replaced four minutes later. Then on the hour we saw a debut from Michele Maccari on the left wing, who replaced the out of sorts Luke Miller with Fofahan taking his place on the right. It seems that every week we have a new player, yet defensively where we have had most issues, there appear to be no changes. It would be nice for the club to provide some sort of player update for our patient supporters at some point in the near future.

One player that was back in Epsom colours was Fabio Nunes who had completed his suspension, and he nearly pulled a goal back for us with a twenty-five yard strike that took a wicked deflection off a defender, but Suarez adjusted brilliantly to stick out a hand and as the ball dribbled away, he recovered to claim the loose ball before Kendall could reach it, although our man was offside anyway.

I referred earlier to Joel Onu, who had been on our bench for a few games, but only making one appearance. The supporters only knew he had left when he appeared in the opposition line up! Clearly Onu also wanted to send a message to our Management that they had made the wrong decision in letting him go, and in the 80th minute he broke our offside trap before slotting the ball under Witter to make the score 3-0. That third goal was also enough to put the visitors above us in the League table.

As the game petered out Onu got through again and although Callum Wilson managed to recover the position, he hurt himself in the process and needed to be replaced. As Luke Taylor came on, it was interesting to note that it was the first time this season that we had used all five substitutes, although Taylor hardly got a touch before the final whistle blew.

This was also our third defeat in a row and more relevantly it was our seventh League match without a win, during which time we have played three of the teams that were below us at the time in Horley, Balham and now Sheerwater without defeating any of them. Whilst we have had good spells in all three of the recent defeats, the results speak for themselves and it's not great form to enter our big F.A. Vase match next Saturday, but at least we will have most of our suspended players back. It also transpires that the club are appealing Green's red card from the Carshalton Athletic match, which on the face of it appears a complete waste of money, as contact was made, however accidental it may have been. Maybe he will be available, maybe he won't; either way, the rest of the team will need to step up a couple of gears if we are to get out of this concerning slump.

In summary, Sheerwater weren't three goals better than us, although it could be argued that they were three goals smarter!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Kailan North, Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Will Kendall, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Nazareth (56), Michele Maccari for Miller (61), Fabio Nunes for North (65), Jason Bloor for Kendall (80), Luke Taylor for Wilson (92)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

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Warm Wednesdays are back in Epsom

7 November 2024



For the third year running Epsom Methodist Church (EMC) is opening its doors and running its Warm Wednesdays programme this winter. EMC is just one of the 80 Warm Welcome spaces across Surrey that are open to all residents free of charge and are a place you can pop in to stay warm, get a hot drink, receive energy advice and much more!

Situated right in the heart of Epsom in Ashley Road, Epsom Methodist Church will be open from 9.30 am to 6pm every Wednesday from 6th November through to the end of March*. We will be providing hot drinks, hot meals, free wi-fi and friendly company and conversation. Everyone and anyone is welcome to drop in for five minutes or stay for the whole day – no booking required.

EMC will also be providing advice on where to go for help with energy bills, benefit problems, financial and housing issues and obtaining warm goods and emergency support. On some Wednesdays we will be joined by advisers from Surrey Community Action who will offer help with keeping energy bills down, dealing with energy providers and claiming benefits such as Pension Credit.

Each Wednesday from 3.30 pm to 6pm EMC's Warm Space will take the form of a free after school club for parents and children. There will be games, crafts and activities before everyone joins together to share an evening meal together. Again no booking is required.
Lead Organiser, Robert Hill, commented:

"Energy prices have gone back up this autumn and we know some households struggle to pay their heating bills. Warm Wednesdays not only provides a place where people can stay warm but they can also find friendship and get practical assistance to help see them through the winter.

"Epsom Methodist Church is proud to be part of a Surrey-wide effort to support communities and provide help for those who need it. And it is great to have the backing of the County Council for what we are doing.

For further information contact Robert Hill on 07802 551636 or email roberthill.home@icloud.com

Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom's Horton Cemetery, inspires artist

7 November 2024



Eric Fong is a multimedia artist whose work spans film, photography, sculpture, and installation, often exploring themes of the body, identity, and vulnerability. His unique approach is informed by his background as a former medical doctor, merging art with science and technology.

His latest project, Apparitions, is a series of cyanotype portraits derived from Victorian-era glass plate negatives of pauper patients from the Manor Hospital (part of the Epsom cluster). These haunting images were salvaged after being abandoned in the 1990s and now reside at Surrey History Centre. Fong's cyanotypes, toned with ivy leaves gathered from

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the burial site of Horton Cemetery, symbolise the connection between the patients' bodies and overgrown landscape. This project reclaims the dignity of these long-forgotten individuals and encourages a reflection on mental illness both in the past and today.

You can also view cyanotypes of found Victorian needlework, referencing those made/mended/worn by female patients in Victorian asylums through his Asylum Needlework project.

Keeping with the Asylum photograph theme, Us and Them led by Alana Harris (Department of History at Kings College London), creatively re-imagined 19th-century asylum photographs to highlight issues surrounding disability and challenge how people with disabilities have been portrayed over time.

In partnership with Surrey History Centre, the project unearthed archival photographs taken in local psychiatric institutions and paired them with newly commissioned portraits of the disabled artists. Guided by portrait photographer Emma Brown and oral historian Laura Mitchison, the artists used historical photographic techniques to create new images that provoke questions about ableism, mental health, and representation.

The project culminated in a public exhibition at The Horton Arts Centre in Epsom, where the new and historical photographs were displayed side by side. The exhibition opened to great public interest, sparking important discussions around disability and inclusion.

Surrey History Centre read more….

Another Surrey borough's Local Plan agony

7 November 2024



More than 800 homes will be built on Surrey green belt land as part of a 15 year plan for 9,270 new properties in the north of the county.

It comes after **Spelthorne Borough Counci**l agreed, last week, to reinstate 13 green belt sites it had removed from its local plan in February.

Opponents have said delays to the borough's planning bible, which sets out where and the types of development that can go ahead for the next 15 years, has turned Spelthorne into "clarion" to be picked off by "vultures".

The council said it changed its position in order to get its housing plan approved under lower targets of 618 a year versus potentially the 700 plus that could come in under national changes to planning law.

Councillor Darren Clarke (Conservative, Laleham and Shepperton Green) spoke out against the hold ups saying residents were "sold a pup" and councillors unable to stop unwanted development.

He said: "The lack of a local plan means that we don't have a five year housing supply.

"This tilts decisions in favour of development, and away from not developing so when we are lobbied by residents to oppose builds we are told by officers that we have no reasons to object.

"We can reject it as the committee and do because we know what good looks like, however the planners can and do apply those with the most money know they will win and we need to pay their expensive legal costs as well

"So we not only end up with buildings which we do not want, lived in by people from potentially outside the borough, hindering, not helping the borough but also a legal bill for us and them, and who pays this, yes the residents.

"We are in a time of planning approval by appeal with developer vultures circling looking at us like carrion.

"What this short sighted administration has done is harm the borough make us look like a laughing stock and cost the residents in hard pounds.

'It's been almost fingers in ears and la la la"

His speech was rebutted by borough leader, Cllr Joanne Sexton who said the so called "pathetic excuse" to delay the local plan had been to protect residents from flooding rather than any quarrels over green belt.

She told the meeting that she was proud and delighted with the work that had gone in to ensure "that now have a statement of common ground with the Environment Agency, who is a key stakeholder, and knows exactly what it is that they needed from us, and I am extremely proud today to be here to be able to take this forward."

Officially the council paused the inspector's examination of its local plan in December 2023 "to allow for training of newly elected councillors" and to consider potential changes to national planning policy.

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In February 2024, the council asked the inspector to remove all green belt allocations, with the exception of the two sites for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople.

The council has now decided to return the 13 protected green belt sites back into the plan so they can be used for housing – before going back to the planning inspector with any proposed changes.

The saga dates back even further with the Secretary of State ordering the council to not pause its plan in September 2023 after councillors asked for a hiatus in June – just a month after examination hearings had started at the end of May.

In all, there will be 855 new homes built on Spelthorne's green belt, of which 438 will be affordable.

Spelthorne Borough Council offices in Knowle Green, Staines. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

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Is Delay Defensible in the Fight to Protect Epsom's Green Belt?

7 November 2024

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
BBC LOCAL NEWS PARTNERSHIPS

As Epsom and Ewell Borough Council deliberates its Local Plan in the face of imminent, significantly higher government housing targets, the council's slow-paced approach raises crucial questions about its strategy to protect our borough's green spaces. Led by the Residents' Association, the council is balancing on a tightrope between procedural rigour and an increasingly urgent need for action. But with higher housing quotas looming, is this balance tipping too far towards delay, at the cost of our precious Green Belt?

Nine opposition councillors have proposed an Emergency Full Council Meeting, arguing that swift action is essential to avoid a target increase to 817 new homes annually—double the current requirement. They rightly point out the risks to Epsom's character and environmental integrity. With development pressure escalating, the loss of even a small proportion of green spaces would have lasting consequences, affecting not just our landscape but also the local ecology and community fabric.

Residents' Association leaders, meanwhile, cite the need for strict adherence to regulatory procedures, with Councillor **Peter O'Donovan** (Chair of the Licensing Policy and Planning Committee, RA Ewell Court) cautioning against shortcuts that might render the plan "unsound" in the eyes of government inspectors. RA Leader Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (Stoneleigh) echoes this sentiment, emphasising the need for quality and robustness in the plan to withstand scrutiny. But, does adherence to every procedural step outweigh the immediate urgency to avoid a government-imposed target that could open up the Green Belt for development?

If every councillor claims to prioritise the protection of our green spaces, it's difficult to justify the RA's slow and careful approach. What would be lost by speeding up the process, even at the risk of minor regulatory issues? The Local Plan's objective is clear: it must serve the community's best interests by ensuring sustainable development, but without jeopardising the green spaces that make Epsom unique. Rushing to complete this plan before the higher targets take effect doesn't mean compromising on quality—it means acknowledging the urgency of our current position.

The RA's insistence on caution may reflect their commitment to procedural integrity, but in the face of a looming housing target that threatens everything they aim to protect, this stance appears increasingly illogical. The stakes are high, and with public consultation already delayed due to a halt in 2023, it is hard to see what further delay achieves. As **Janice Baker** of the Epsom Green Party rightly points out, legal pathways exist to expedite the consultation phase, saving precious weeks and potentially allowing the community to dodge the higher target.

In the end, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council must decide if this cautious approach truly serves our borough's best interests. Every resident who treasures our green spaces deserves a council that can act quickly and decisively in their defence. The council's commitment to procedural correctness is admirable, but it must be weighed against the real and immediate threat of intensified development. It's time to ask, "What are we willing to risk?" Because in this case, the greatest risk might just be the price of waiting.

Related reports:

Call to Epsom and Ewell Council to speed plan denied

Opposition Calls for Emergency Council Meeting Over Epsom and Ewell Local Plan

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Call to Epsom and Ewell Council to speed plan denied

7 November 2024





Nine opposition councillors on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are calling for an Emergency Full Council Meeting to fast-track the final stages of the borough's Local Plan amid looming concerns over potential new housing targets set by the central government. The councillors—comprising members of the Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Conservative parties—are urging swift action, fearing that delays could lead to increased housing quotas that would place significant pressure on the borough's cherished green spaces.

The councillors' proposal, initially set out in a formal request dated 24th October, has stirred considerable debate across the council. They propose that the emergency meeting be held immediately following the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) meeting on 20th November or, failing that, on the evening of the 21st November. In doing so, they hope to expedite the draft Local Plan's approval, enabling the next public consultation phase to commence before the year's end.

The Case for Urgency: New Housing Targets and Local Development

At the heart of the opposition councillors' concerns are potential changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which could soon enforce a higher housing target of 817 new homes annually—over double the borough's existing requirement. One opposition councillor highlighted the urgency, warning, "If the Local Plan fails or is found unsound, we will be subject to the Labour government's new targets, which are 817 dwellings per annum."

These new targets, if implemented, could lead to development encroaching on the borough's green spaces, a possibility that has mobilised both councillors and local residents. This anxiety is reflected in the recent appeals from local groups, including the Epsom Green Belt Group, which advocates for focusing on brownfield sites rather than encroaching on protected land.

Council's Response: A Call for Procedural Compliance

In response, council leaders from the Residents' Association majority group have expressed concerns about rushing the Local Plan process, citing the necessity of adhering to legal and procedural requirements. Chair of the LPPC, Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) emphasised the importance of a comprehensive review process to ensure that any amendments to the draft Local Plan comply with regulations before it proceeds to public consultation. He stated, "The documents which will form the Regulation 19 consultation must be prepared in accordance with the regulations, including the legally required Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment."

O'Donovan added that should any changes be proposed during the LPPC's 20th November meeting, additional time would be necessary for council officers to update the documentation. Failure to address these requirements, he warned, could result in the plan being deemed "unsound" by government inspectors.

Residents' Association View: Balancing Timeliness and Quality

Residents' Association Leader Councillor **Hannah Dalton** (Stoneleigh), in her response to the opposition's proposal, reiterated the council's commitment to both transparency and quality in the Local Plan's development. Dalton acknowledged the delay caused by a temporary halt in 2023 but argued that accelerating the current schedule could compromise the quality and legal robustness of the plan. "We can't simply 'speed up' to replace six months of lost time," she remarked, noting that the council remains committed to commencing the Regulation 19 public consultation "at the earliest possible opportunity after the November meeting of the LPPC."

In a letter addressing a recent call from the Epsom Green Party, Dalton also noted that bypassing the LPPC's role could undermine the Local Plan's overall integrity. She explained, "Circumventing the LPP meeting… bypasses LPP, which has been tasked with the development of the Local Plan." Any changes agreed upon by Full Council would still require further work to comply with legally mandated procedures, she added.

Epsom Green Party's Intervention: Legal Pathways to Expedite Consultation

Meanwhile, **Janice Baker**, Chair of the Epsom Green Party, recently suggested an alternative approach. In a letter to Dalton, Baker proposed a legally permissible pathway for Full Council to assume the LPPC's role, potentially scheduling a Full Council meeting in place of the LPPC's 20th November session. This approach, she argued, could save several weeks and allow the Regulation 19 consultation to conclude by early January 2025, ahead of the potential NPPF changes.

"Many residents have been frustrated by the lack of open discussion," Baker stated, adding that the proposed approach "provides a chance to avoid this disaster." She further urged that any potential legal impediments to this plan be swiftly addressed by the council's legal team, emphasising that delays could lead to increased housing requirements that would place "extremely significant environmental, financial, and social costs" on the borough.

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Residents and Environmental Campaigners Express Growing Concern

The debate has galvanised local community groups and residents who are deeply invested in the borough's planning future. The Epsom Green Belt Group has argued for prioritising brownfield sites to protect greenfield areas and prevent the urban sprawl that they fear could follow under new NPPF guidelines. Their concerns were echoed during the LPPC's October meeting, where residents spoke passionately against any development that could jeopardise the area's green spaces.

Adding further weight to the opposition's argument, local Liberal Democrat leader Councillor **Julie Morris** (College) criticised Mayor **Steven Bridger**'s (RA Stamford) refusal to consider an Emergency Council Meeting (ECM) for 21st November. Bridger had stated that an ECM would not allow sufficient time for officers to finalise the necessary documentation and for councillors to adequately review it. However, Morris rebutted that the ECM was intended "to allow Council as a whole to sign off the draft Local Plan AND any amendments agreed on 20th November," thus expediting the consultation's start before the end of the year.

The opposition councillors are now considering other procedural avenues to press forward with the Local Plan, underscoring their commitment to avoid the looming 817-unit target.

What's Next? A Community on Edge

The path forward for Epsom and Ewell's Local Plan remains uncertain, as councillors and community members await the LPPC's 20th November meeting. The stakes are high for the borough, with questions about housing supply, environmental conservation, and procedural integrity all coming to the fore. The decisions made in the coming weeks will not only determine the scale of future developments but will also shape the borough's character for years to come.

In the words of Councillor Dalton, "Balancing development with the preservation of our borough's character is challenging but essential." With the pressure mounting from opposition members and concerned residents alike, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council faces critical choices as it navigates the complex and often conflicting demands of local governance and sustainable growth.

Related reports:

Opposition Calls for Emergency Council Meeting Over Epsom and Ewell Local Plan

Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up

Time to press the gas on Epsom's Local Plan?

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets

Surrey support for the "financially challenged"

7 November 2024



Surrey County Council welcomes the extension by government of the Household Support Fund in this year's Autumn Statement, after 86,000 Surrey households were supported by the fund last year.

In addition to the Household Support fund this autumn and winter, the council will continue to support residents with financial help, support and information. The council has, alongside partners, established a priority focus on 21 key neighbourhoods identified as having the highest levels of disadvantage, aligning with the organisation's aim to enable as many people as possible to access the right support.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Health said: *"We recognise times are still financially challenging for both Surrey residents and local government. As an organisation we commit to do the best we can with the resources we have available to us – working with system-wide partners across Surrey to ensure No One Is Left Behind. We therefore welcome the continuing support the Household Fund provides us to help Surrey's most vulnerable residents and organisations such as SGN who have once again supported us with funding."*

Other support available to residents includes:

- Continued provision of the **Surrey Crisis Fund**. Thanks to funding from SGN, the council is able to offer the continued provision of the Surrey Crisis Fund. The Surrey Crisis Fund provides financial help to Surrey residents who have nowhere else to turn in an emergency or following a disaster. It also can provide assistance to set up a home in the community where no other funds or resources are available.
- **Warm Welcomes** launch again in November across the county as places where residents can enjoy a safe,

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warm, friendly environment to have a hot drink, read a book, socialise with others and receive energy saving information and advice.

- Surrey County Council have been working with **Citizens Advice** who can provide free advice and support on benefits, housing, debt and a range of other problems that people might be experiencing.
- The online **Financial, Welfare and Health and Wellbeing Hub** has been updated with the all the latest information to help with everyday living expenses **surreycc.gov.uk/welfare.**
- Free online **Energy Advice Tool** for information and advice on a range of topics including debt relief grants and fuel vouchers.
- Surrey County Council is working in partnership with FurbNow to launch a Home Energy Improvement 'One-Stop Shop' offering **subsidised 'Home Energy Plans'** and hassle-free energy saving measure installations.
- Continue to work closely with the **Voluntary Community Social Enterprise** sector to ensure the right support gets to Surrey's most vulnerable residents.
- 52 **Libraries** across Surrey continue to provide face-to-face support in communities for those who may be struggling. Providing a space to meet others, offering free Wi-Fi, access to computers, digital upskilling, volunteers who can help with digital support.
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service **Safe and Well** visits out in the community often identify vulnerable residents and where they think appropriate, they can provide winter essentials, heaters, fuel vouchers and electric blankets thanks to our partnership with SGN.
- Working with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People to provide a number of cost-of-living initiatives to support disabled residents with rising energy bills.
- In October, as part of the organisation's ongoing priority of ensuring No One Is Left Behind, Surrey County Council signed the Good Company's End Poverty Pledge – **Surrey County Council signs the End Poverty Pledge | Surrey News**

The Community Helpline is also available to talk to someone to help residents check that they are getting all the financial support they are entitled to and maximising their income. The Community Helpline is available on **0300 200 1008** 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday except bank holidays.

Photo by Timur Weber

Epsom school fined for finger loss

7 November 2024



A school trust in Surrey has been fined after part of a pupil's finger was amputated.

The five-year-old boy, a Year 1 pupil at Danetree Primary School in Epsom, had been leaving the toilet on 15 June 2022 when his right hand slipped and went into the hinge side of a door.

There was no door guard installed and he trapped his right hand in the door.

This led to the tip of his middle finger becoming detached as his right hand was stuck in the door.

A teacher found the tip of his middle finger, and the boy underwent surgery to re-attach his finger at St Georges Hospital in Tooting, London.

Although younger pupils in Key Stage 1 were taught in a newer building where hinge guards had been fitted on the doors, the incident occurred in a separate building where the older children in Key Stage 2 were taught.

The Key Stage 1 pupils would use the Key Stage 2 building at least once a week to use its library and learn about music and science. While in this building, the Key Stage 1 pupils were allowed to use the toilets unsupervised.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found GLF Schools, the trust that runs Danetree Primary School, had failed to identify the risk to its Key Stage 1 pupils while using the toilets. This meant hinge guards were not installed on the toilet doors of the building where Key Stage 2 pupils were taught.

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GLF Schools, of Picquets Way, Banstead, Surrey, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The trust was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £6,875.70 in costs at Staines Magistrates' Court on 30 October 2024.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said: "This little boy and his family could have been spared a lot of pain and upset if the trust had installed widely available, effective and inexpensive hinge guards on the doors the young children had access to. I would ask all schools to review their estates to make sure they have hinge guards where needed so no other children are hurt in this way when at school."

The Horton Hid Hiring From Regulator

7 November 2024



Controversy surrounded the appointment of the salaried Centre Manager of Epsom and Ewell's new arts and exhibition venue, The Horton Arts Centre.

Documents obtained by the Epsom and Ewell Times under Freedom of Information Act requests reveal that the Charity Commission found that the trustees of the Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society did not seek its prior permission to employ the wife of a trustee.

A recently retired trustee, a trustee or a person connected to a trustee through marriage may not be given paid employment by their charity without prior Charity Commission approval.

The Commission found that Maria Reeves, the wife of founding chairman of the Charity, Ian Reeves, who was herself previously a trustee, was appointed to the manager role without its permission.

In these circumstances the Commission would normally order the trustees to pay the Charity the salary of the employee in question. However, in this case the Commission determined that the appointment had been hidden from the Commission for so long that such an order would be "disproportionate".

The Commission also determined that the eventual appointment was "made in good faith", but refused to answer how that finding was compatible with the failure to seek its permission. It has also refused to disclose the justification submitted to it by the trustees for the retrospective Commission approval.

Other documents obtained by the Epsom and Ewell Times show that an earlier recruitment exercise, described by an expert as "exemplary", was reversed on the intervention of trustees, including the then Chair Ian Reeves and his next door neighbour and trustee, Rupert Salmon.

That process had not short-listed the Chair's wife Maria Reeves.

One former short-listed candidate who asked not to be named said: "I was of course disappointed that the recruitment process for The Horton Centre Director role was aborted as I had been shortlisted to the second round and was expecting to attend a second interview.

With regards to the Charity Commission's role – it is disappointing that the Charity Commission's own guidelines were difficult to enforce in this instance."

None of the short-listed candidates from the aborted recruitment process were invited to re-apply and it appears that the recruitment process that led to the appointment of Maria Reeves was from a candidate list of one.

Ian Reeves and Rupert Salmon have been requested on a number of occasions to provide their response. Our press regulator confirmed that they had been provided with a reasonable opportunity to do so.

One former trustee stated: "Mr and Mrs Reeves deserved a reward for all the unpaid effort they had put into converting this disused chapel into a beautiful arts centre".

Lionel Blackman, a former trustee and chair of the initial 6 strong recruitment committee, that consisted of three independent trustees and three independent external experts, said "I only wish to make a general observation that trustees of charities should comply with the rules. That expectation is somewhat heightened when a charity has been given £3 million of public money."

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Caring Mentors in Epsom and Ewell sought for young

7 November 2024



MCR Pathways, (Mentoring, Charity, Relationships) an award-winning charity dedicated to transforming the lives of young people through mentorship, is looking for volunteer mentors to support a young person throughout their education.

The charity addresses the widening gap in educational and employment outcomes between care-experienced young people and their peers. Research shows that those who do not receive MCR Pathways mentorship are 23% less likely to progress to college, university, or employment compared to their mentored peers. By connecting young people with caring mentors, MCR Pathways helps bridge the gap between aspiration and achievement.

Mentors meet with their mentees for just one hour each week in school. This consistent interaction provides a valuable opportunity for young people to focus on their future, discuss any concerns, and share their thoughts and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Research shows that even one hour a week with a caring adult can significantly boost a young person's confidence, improve academic performance, and open doors to a brighter future.

Since its founding in 2007, MCR Pathways has made a significant impact, launching its programme in Surrey in 2021 and establishing partnerships with seven schools across the county. With the growing demand for mentors, MCR Pathways is actively seeking new volunteers in **Epsom and Ewell**. If you're ready to make a meaningful impact in your community, find a school near you by visiting mcrpathways.org/school-locator.

To find out more about the programme and to register, head to mcrpathways.org/whats-stopping-you or for any enquiries about becoming a mentor, please reach out to Liz Grace, MCR Pathways' Surrey Volunteer Recruitment Manager, at liz.grace@mcrpathways.org or call 07483 390702. Together, we can help create a future where every young person has the opportunity to thrive. Join MCR Pathways today and be the change in a young person's life!

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