

# Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell 2024 Impact Report

Impact	Activities
<p>Enhanced service and access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First year of Surreywide Adviceline (phone service) significantly increasing the number of calls answered</li> <li>• First year of Financial Wellbeing &amp; Support Service, a joint service with Mary Frances Trust to support clients holistically with both their finances and mental health</li> <li>• New access opportunity via direct applications for the Household Support Fund</li> <li>• Commenced 8<sup>th</sup> year of Project Wenceslas partnership project with Epsom &amp; Ewell Rotaries, supporting those in fuel poverty</li> <li>• Recruited 14 new volunteers during 2024 to develop our service capacity covering key areas such as digital support, drop-in Advisers, Surrey Adviceline, form filling and research and campaigns.</li> <li>• Commenced framework and seeking funding to expand outreach to cover the whole borough.</li> </ul>
<p>Community engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awarded Family Building Society Charity of the Year</li> <li>• Awarded Nationwide Bank Community Colleague grant</li> <li>• 85<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration</li> <li>• Expanded Financial Literacy project to four local schools</li> <li>• Joined the Epsom BID</li> </ul>

## 2025 Risks & Issues:

- The funding environment remains extremely competitive. In 2025 we are expecting to lose a long running source of funding for provision of money advice whilst the costs of running the service continue to rise.
- Our ambitions to increase and enhance our much needed service are limited by our inability to plan long term with decreasing and short term income streams. Financial uncertainty may result in the loss of vital knowledge and experience from within our small team of paid staff.
- The office move from the Old Town Hall is expected to take place by the end of 2025. We will need to review our service delivery model in the light of likely reduced space. It will also require significant planning, resource and communications to ensure service continuity throughout the process.



## Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell 2024 Impact Report

This report to EEBC's Community & Wellbeing Committee, demonstrates how CAEE has partnered with EEBC and other community organisations to enhance our offering and enable more local people to access the help they need. We are extremely grateful to EEBC for the support it provides.

- This year we partnered with EEBC to distribute £30k of the Household Support Fund. We were the only partner to receive direct applications via EEBC's website. In addition, we identified clients needing support via our exploration of their issues. This allowed us to distribute the much needed funds to the most vulnerable in society and engage with clients to assess other ways to support them.
- A new Surrey wide Adviceline phone service in 2024 allowed us to increase the number of phone calls answered by 20%.
- We expanded our Financial Literacy project teaching money management skills to 16 -18 year olds to four local schools.
- We have been successful in a joint bid with other local Citizens Advice to provide Advice First Aid across Surrey. We will train other community organisations to understand the help we can provide, how to use Citizens Advice resources and how to refer when more in-depth support is needed.
- In the year we celebrated 85 years of giving advice in Epsom & Ewell we continued our focus on community engagement to raise awareness of our services, recruit new volunteers and fundraise.

## Key Statistics 2024:

We helped **3,258** people with **10,046** issues



Over **£1m** income gained for our clients



We helped **161** clients and their families with advice and support by distributing **£30k** of EEBC's Household Support Fund



**83%** of clients said that we helped them find a way forward and **84%** said they would recommend our service



'I am eternally grateful for the help and support that I received from Citizens Advice, the Advisor made me feel at ease and far less stressed.'

A thank you from one of our clients:

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## Central Surrey Voluntary Action

Supporting the voluntary sector in Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell and Mole Valley

### **Update on work undertaken from April 2024 – November 2024**

Central Surrey Voluntary Action have supported 359 organisations in the last 7 months. The interests of the sector range from older people to sports, environment and children and young people.

We have allocated 56 hours a week staff time to Epsom and Ewell at a total of £1,042 per week. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council fund us £7998 per annum. We currently have 1 volunteer supporting our Epsom and Ewell work which equates to an indicative cost for volunteer support of £4,305 per annum.

Indicative salary for volunteers is based on £13.80 per hour for standard support and £25.00 for “professional” support. These rates are used by Surrey County Council. Those volunteers who receive a significant amount of training and are therefore an expert in their field would come under the higher rate.

We have undertaken 100 DBS checks. We have gone back to providing face to face checks at the behest of DBS. We have signed up organisations to do the checks themselves if they are able to through our account. Charges for the checks done through CSVA have increased to: Volunteers check (for all levels) £15, Staff Enhanced DBS - £61.60, Staff Standard - £39.60. These charges are due to increase due to higher costs passed on by DBS.

### **Volunteer Centre**

Our Volunteer Centre in Epsom is open to the public but only on Mondays and Wednesdays unless an interview has been booked.

We invite potential volunteers in for a chat with an adviser, when people express an interest in volunteering, we are giving them a call first to ascertain whether they need to come in. Volunteer roles have picked up a little in the last few months with organisations looking to recruit volunteers and more people during the summer months looking to volunteer. Figures have not returned to pre-pandemic numbers even though we have put a lot of effort into recruitment and many of our organisations are struggling with the lack of new volunteers coming forward





## Central Surrey Voluntary Action

Supporting the voluntary sector in Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell and Mole Valley

Over the last 4 months we have registered 153 new volunteers, referred 154, recorded 30 new opportunities, and placed 64 volunteers. . This equates to approximately £113,050 worth of volunteering.

### Funding

During this period a lot of our Charities have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Increased costs on utility bills, rent and staffing costs and the loss of regular funding streams they rely upon, has put an inordinate strain on the sector. We have been supporting Charities with new funding applications, making them aware of new funding streams and sending out information of new funding when it becomes available. We are sending out regular funding newsletters and have delivered 4 online webinars focussing on the funding cycle and meeting the funders. Since April our funding advisor has generated £750k worth of funding for VCSE organisations.

### STEP Ukraine

#### Specialist Training Employment Program (STEP)

Central Surrey Voluntary Action, in partnership with [World Jewish Relief](#), is launching a one-year project to assist Ukrainian refugees in finding employment. The Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP) for Ukrainian refugees living in Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Elmbridge.

STEP is an award-winning program developed by World Jewish Relief in 2016. It is open to **anyone from Ukraine** who is **over 18** and arrived in the UK on either the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Ukraine Family Scheme, or the Ukraine Extension Scheme. The Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP) is free for all participants.



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Over 80 Ukrainian clients received personalised employment support, including CV assistance, cover letter writing, and general job advice.

New clients continue to enrol each month, ensuring ongoing support aligned with project outputs.

Weekly drop-in sessions at the Epsom & Ewell Employment Hub have allowed consistent access to guidance and resources, directly impacting the community by offering a reliable support structure.

We hosted a meaningful event that celebrated the spirit of resilience and dedication. It was a special gathering where Ukrainian guests came together to enjoy inspiring performances and connect with one another.

### **VCSE support**

Since April 2024, we are supporting and providing on-going support from 13 community groups who wants to set up a charity to provide services to children and young people through sport, environment, skills, building confidence and tackling social isolation. We provide guidance on charity governance, to develop missions and goals and setting up/ recruiting board members and building strategic plans for the organisations. We work closely with Surrey County Council's Community Link Officers to identify needs, gaps to support the community groups and Social Enterprise.

## AGE CONCERN EPSOM & EWELL – 2024 SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR EEBC

2024 saw a significant increase in enquiries through our I&A desk resulting in an increase in our client database by promoting our services at outreach settings, and increasing our marketing presence through social media channels, newsletters, and increased marketing activity. We also have seen an increase of referrals from the statutory sector including the ICP, PCN and EEBC

Our service delivery included:

**Information & Advice** - support providing a free and confidential information & advice service on a wide range of issues affecting older people, through a dedicated help desk by phone, e mail or one to one. Providing the right information at the right time we save clients and their carers time, money, as well as unnecessary worry and ensuring effective interventions. Delivered by our Information & Advice Officer supported by 7 volunteers on the I&A desk. 2716 clients made use of our I&A service. 8 office volunteers support office administration.

**Home Visiting** - assessing clients' needs in their own surroundings including welfare benefits checks. Increase in income by benefits successfully claimed. Improved financial circumstances a key indicator for improved health and wellbeing. Successful Blue Badge applications helping mobility. Referral to Social Services, Occupational Therapist or other specialist organisations i.e. for Dementia and Parkinson's support. Delivered by our Home Visitor. Attendance Allowance claims = 166 worth £200,000, Blue Badge applications = 98.

**Medical Transport Scheme** - service used by clients to medical appointments, or to visit family or friends in hospital or residential homes. Less medical appointments missed. Monies saved as service less expensive than taxis. Cost effective service as run by volunteers. Clients raise issues with the drivers who pass the matter onto our I&A and Home Visiting team. Overseen by our Office Manager. Supported by 23 volunteer drivers (2 volunteers have completed 2500 drives each) and 6 transport desk volunteers. 142 members, 1009 drives made.

**Men's Club** - dedicated to like-minded men within the borough sharing knowledge and skills and meeting to enjoy activities of their choice. Alleviating and reducing isolation and loneliness within the Borough. Delivered by our Men's Club Co-ordinator with 30 members.

**Befriending Service** - supporting lonely and isolated older people, who live alone, with volunteer befrienders. Delivered by our Social Support co-ordinator, supported by 56 volunteer befrienders.

**Monthly Sunday Teas** - providing a full tea and entertainment once a month with transport. Overseen by Social Support Co-ordinator, supported by 10 volunteers at the tea and 20 drivers. 35 members.

**IT Support 'Helping Hands'** – one to one support in clients' own home with computer, tablet or phone and monthly computer club. Overseen by I&A volunteers. Supported by 7 volunteers with a broad knowledge of modern technology. 35 visits made.

**DIY Support** - doing small DIY jobs in clients' homes. Overseen by I&A volunteers. Supported by 8 DIY volunteers. 32 visits made.

**Volunteers** - supporting the services that Age Concern Epsom & Ewell deliver. Delivered by our Volunteer co-ordinator supporting 177 volunteers. Volunteer hours' worth £175,000 per annum

**Fundraising & Marketing** – delivered by our Fundraising & Marketing Co-ordinator

Our fundraising events include: An Easter Egg Trail in Rosebery Park, Fundraising dinners, Health & Wellbeing Fair in Rosebery Park, Quiz Night, Candlelit Christmas concert, Christmas fundraising stalls, including 10 days in the Ashley centre selling knitted and crafted goods.

Local businesses have been very generous with donations. Charities, local not for profit groups and councillors have also supported us: Epsom Rotary, Epsom Arts Society, EEBC & Surrey Councillors John Beckett, Jan Mason, and Eber Kington.

We have had very generous private donations and legacies which have been a major part of our income this year.

**ACEE 'In Memory Woodland'** - £15,959 was secured from Eber Kington via his allocation of the Your Fund Surrey Small Community Fund. The woodland is being planted in Long Grove Park, Epsom and will be launched in June 2025.

**Sparks Fund** – Funding secured to deliver an outreach Information & Advice service in Court Ward. 354 people of pensionable age accessed the service with positive outcomes: signposting to all ACEE services for support and referring to statutory, health and other charities for appropriate support due to client's needs.

Please note that this report encompasses the period of 1st April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Over the past year, Sunnybank has delivered new opportunities across all of its services and reached new parts of the community. The charity has supported a 15% growth in new active partners to the charity.

**Choices:** Since November 2023, Sunnybank has provided over 305 clubs and social activities ranging from our sensory Sunny Afternoon Club for those with more complex needs (average attendance of 30 partners per week), allotment gardening groups, monthly Swag discos (average of 36 partners), the drama club (average attendance of 15 partners) as well as the weekly Coffee and Chat. In the summer, the drama group devised and premiered their own interpretation of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' to over 100 audience members from the local community. New activities have included an indoor/outdoor bowling club, a second gardening group at the allotment as well as a summer Club Tripicana (a partner driven club that organises trips out to local and London based venues). Our twice weekly radio shows listener statistics increased by 22% to 170 listeners per show. Themes have included mental health, Hospital Passports – what they are and how to use them to name a few.

**Voices:** Through our advocacy team we have supported 187 issues per month, ranging from health and social care to accommodation needs, benefit changes as well as safeguarding and scams. With the weakened national infrastructure, we have witnessed an increase in need specifically around social care and access to health services which has greatly impacted our advocacy work as well as the subsequent general anxiety levels within the learning disability community. As a result over 50% of our issues are supporting people on health, medical and social care needs.

**Futures:** Over the past year we have worked with the Futures cohort, across key areas including sex and relationships, budgeting, cooking and independence and employability skills. In response to the issues faced by our younger cohort we connected with NHS Surrey and Borders LD nurses' team and piloted the first Sex and relationships 10-week workshop addressing all issues connected including gender, sexuality, friendships, relationships, what is abuse and how to say no!

The evaluation feedback showed that 100% confirmed that they felt more confident and 98% said they felt they understood more. Through observation, we have witnessed an increase of confidence in 100% of the group. As a result, the Sunnybank pilot group have gone on to take on lead roles in two 'Shout out Sex' events in Surrey – supporting others with LD to understand what makes a healthy relationship. The group have also focused on budgeting via discussions, practical exercises and a Sunnybank 'budget game! Cookery sessions were provided through the partnership with Foodwise in Woking, where good nutrition and how to prepare food independently and safely were discussed.

With an increase of 15% of new partners, we have seen the annual average number of touchpoints across our services (including advocacy) for the past year is 46 times per partner with a 100% return rate.

Based on the evaluation work we have run through our partner forums, the feedback we have received is as follows:

- a. The Sunny Afternoon Club had 100% stating they look forward to the club with 100% saying that they have made new friends. 100% confirm new skills such as boccia, team games, puzzles, gardening and cookery.
- b. The monthly SWAG disco club received 100% satisfaction rate with the key elements of music, dancing and talking to friends as the reason they enjoy using the club. Outcomes also included the fact that partners liked making new friends and feeling safe.
- c. The Sunnybank Pub Quiz received 95% of attendees saying they felt more confident due to the weekly format and seeing each other.

The Futures cohort recruited a further 5 partners in this past year (a growth of 39%) - this is the largest influx to date. This year, we conducted an external evaluation on how to improve the delivery of Futures - our bespoke transition service as well as articulate more fully the outcomes gained by partners as follows:

Within Voices, our advocacy service that supports people to have their own voice in managing their own lives, we have supported 187 issues per month. Over 50% of those issues have been focused on health and social care support.



Understand Us and our communications work is vital to ensure that the voices of our partners are heard. The work undertaken by the Understand Us team is gradually increasing based on professional recommendations.

This year the Understand Us team have given 10 major presentations including the NHS Surrey Heartlands conference, NHS Surrey Downs conference, Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors Members briefing.

Outcomes have included an increased awareness of the needs and adjustments required by the LD community as well as specific projects including a review of the accessibility in local election provision, assessing the accessibility of council meetings, increased awareness of the use of health passports and the important connection to the annual health checks.

<https://insight.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/issue-117-october-2024/the-news/councillors-welcome-sunnybank-trust-consultancy-understand-us>

In January the team gave a learning disability awareness presentation to the SunflowerHD organisation and a further podcast. The outcomes included the team developing a specific 'I have a learning disability' lanyard for SunflowerHD.

<https://we.tl/t-TgW3MFyJel>

Additional presentations include the local Rotary groups, WI, local church. Launched the Understand Us social media profile across Linked In, facebook and Instagram.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/understand-us-uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/understand.us.uk/>

Our advocacy team provided advocacy training to Adult Social Care on what is effective and powerful advocacy for those with complex needs.

Our work and outcomes with the learning disability community wouldn't be possible without the support of the Epsom and Ewell Borough. Thank you!