



Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network was launched in 2015 following the Syrian crisis and the need for support of refugees grew. It was launched by the same founders as Good Company (formerly Epsom and Ewell Foodbank).

Epsom & Ewell Foodbank was launched in October 2012, following research into whether there was need for a foodbank in our community and has grown to include five centres in Epsom, Ewell, Leatherhead, Tadworth and Banstead.

Good Company: Good Company (Surrey) which was established in 2022 as a charity incorporating all our projects aimed at preventing and alleviating local poverty. The foodbank is a Trussell Trust franchised foodbank who run over 400 foodbanks across the country. The Pantry is part of the Your Local Pantry Network.

Background: In 2023 we distributed food and other essentials for over 10,000 people through our food bank centres. The pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis have had a dramatic effect on all our work, nearly doubling demand for the foodbank. Our desire has always been to work towards a community without a need for a foodbank, however the massive increase in demand for our services has made this more challenging than ever.

In recent years we have begun several Initiatives in response to identified needs in our community:

- Offered more than just food e.g. toiletries, pet food, fresh food donated from supermarkets with short life span.
- Employed Support Workers to help people to address the underlying issues that were often keeping them in poverty.
- Launched the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network
- Ran a cooking course called "Eat Well Spend Less"
- Launched a Digital Inclusion project during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Provided seasonal support (Christmas vouchers, Easter, and school holiday support)
- Energy support scheme along with energy 'top-ups'
- Ran the second phase of the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission
- Piloted and rolled out our Cost of the School Day project
- Launched the Epsom Pantry and opened Banstead Pantry in 2024.

In 2024 we were encouraged to see a reduction in foodbank use, which we believe is a result of our increased focus on participation and prevention.

We estimate that through our activities we support approximately 4000 unique people and have over 36,000 supportive interactions a year.

Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network (EERN): EERN supports families through the Afghan and Syrian resettlement schemes and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, as well as asylum seekers and those who have recently received refugee status.

We want to continue delivering the best service we can for people that arrive in our community, having experienced the trauma of displacement, to enable them to thrive.

Refugees often have unique needs and experience trauma as a result of being forcibly displaced. There are a range of barriers that refugees face when arriving in a new country that impact access to support and community connections. These barriers impact all areas of life, including language, housing, employment, mental and physical health and children's wellbeing and educational outcomes. Many services don't understand how to meet the unique needs of refugees, and many refugees find it difficult to understand and navigate local systems without support. Even after living in the UK for several years, those we work with often feel unable to use their skills and experience in a meaningful way.

Our plans for this year are to focus on the following key areas of support

- Community Building
- Understanding Systems
- Learning English

The Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant role is very much at the heart of what we do on a day-to-day basis at EERN. Come and be part of our friendly and growing team.

The need for change: As Good Company continues to work towards its mission of creating a poverty-free future, we are focused on developing a local system of support that shows kindness and dignity to everyone in our community who experiences financial hardship and/or displacement.

To do this we continue to work through our values of compassion, hope and justice and to ensure that those who experience poverty and or displacement are engaged and involved in what we do, to create a fairer community for all.

If you would like to know anything else or have an informal chat then please do contact us.

Jonathan Lees

Founder & Managing Director

February, 2025.