

West Berkshire SEND Local Offer Newsletter Winter 2020



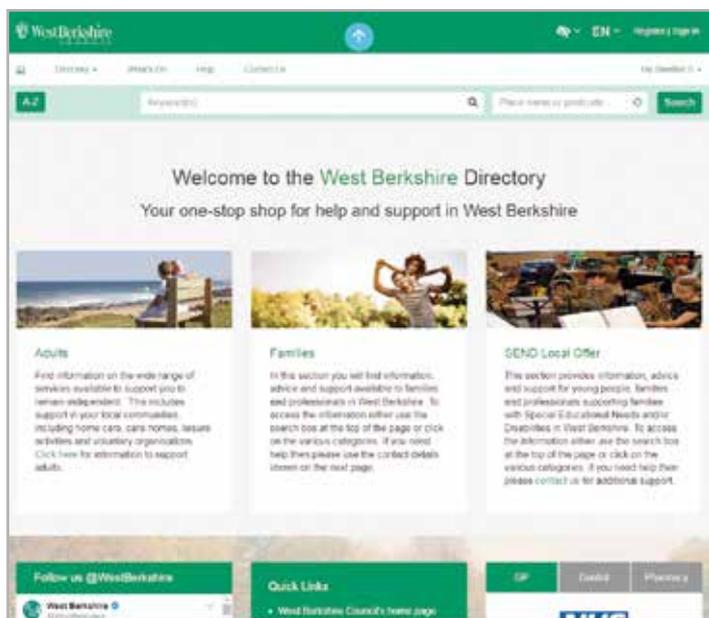
West Berkshire Directory website

What is the West Berkshire Directory?

The Directory is free, available online, and gives details of the wide range of information, advice and support that's available across West Berkshire for adults, families and children. It includes lists of useful phone numbers, email addresses and websites of local and national organisations.

The Directory is easy to use and gives anyone an important first point of contact for many support networks. There is a huge amount of advice and support out there along with so many organisations and community groups running events and activities in our area, the Directory gives people the first step towards accessing all this knowledge and all these networks.

There are around 2000 records that are continually being updated, which includes news, advice and guidance articles, training events, social activities and much more.



And it is different to the West Berkshire Council website because.....

The Directory provides records, news articles of internal and external organisations and events. GP practices (via Social Prescribers) in the local area are working towards signposting patients

towards the Directory and have a dedicated section on their website.

West Berkshire is fortunate to have a diverse range of support services available which are provided by all kinds of organisations, the voluntary sector and individuals.

We are rich in community based resources, the Directory brings together information on activities and opportunities which can enhance all aspects of our lives.

Why do we need one?

The Adults Social Care information Point (SCiP) went live in 2011, initially to meet obligations under the Transformation of the Adult Social Care agenda and latterly complied with the Care Act (2014) requirements. The Family Information Service (FIS) was part of a charity that was taken on by WBC in 2011 and the Local Offer was first established in 2014.

There is also a statutory duty for every authority to provide a Family Information Service & SEND Local Offer information site.

The Social Care information Point sat on a separate platform to the Family information service and SEND Local Offer sites. The 3 sites have now been incorporated into the one West Berkshire Directory.

Who is it aimed at?

Are you a parent worried about your child and needing someone to talk to? Or maybe you're caring for a friend or relative feeling isolated and want to know what sort of support is available in your community. Are you looking for a youth club for your child with autism?

For adults there is information about a range of resources in your community that can help you remain independent or feel less isolated. This includes information about leisure activities and local support groups which run events that could help you get out more and make new friends.

SEND Local Offer supports families with children and young people aged from 0-25, providing information on activities, education, health, travel and money matters. All these areas of the Directory have many records that provide a mine of valuable information.

These sections provide a wealth of information on childcare, Early Years Funding, leisure activities, support services and much more including a telephone line offering free help and advice for parents, parents-to-be, carers and professionals.

You can email directory@westberks.gov.uk or phone 01635 503100 for more help.

Who contributes?

The Local Authority has many entries of its own services in the Directory and many other entries which could be from any type of organisation or individual offering a service.

If you know of a local organisation or community group providing a service or activities for anyone living in West Berkshire, they can submit their entry into the Directory and will be responsible for maintaining its accuracy. The Directory is updated almost daily.

West Berkshire, a great place to live with great amenities, do you know what's on offer for you and your family?

The answers to all these questions, and more, are now available at the touch of a button in the West Berkshire Directory, which brings together a wealth of information in the Adults, Family Information Service and SEND Local Offer sections.

We are keen to raise the profile of the West Berkshire Directory with users and contributors.

You can find the Directory on <https://directory.westberks.gov.uk>

The Disabled Children's Register

West Berkshire's Disabled Children Register (DCR) is a secure database which aims to capture information about all children and young people aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in West Berkshire. The information that you give us will be used anonymously to show the use of and demand for services in West Berkshire. We will use this information to help us to plan, monitor and develop appropriate facilities and services for disabled children and their families.

The DCR is managed by the West Berkshire Directory. Registering is voluntary but we would like to encourage as many of you as possible to register so that we can get as clear a picture as possible of the needs for services in West Berkshire.

To register you must complete a simple online form which will allow you to provide us with



details of your child. We will be able to use your contact details to keep you up-to-date with developments in services and other relevant information for disabled children and young people.

[Registering for the Disabled Children's Register](#)

Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool



Thank you for taking the time to respond to the POET survey in 2018-2019. This survey is about the impact of support for children and young people with SEND, and their families, in West Berkshire. The Local Authority received a report over the summer which compares the responses received in West Berkshire to the responses received nationally, and the results are very encouraging. Please visit the West Berkshire Local Offer website to read the full reports.

The survey links for 2019-20 are now live and, as always, we would appreciate you completing this survey and encouraging others to do so. Please contact nikki.stevens@westberks.gov.uk if you would like hard copies of the survey or if you have any questions.

You can [complete the practitioners survey on line](#)

The [survey for parents and carers](#)

The [survey for children and young people](#)

Castle Gate

Hooray! Castle Gate has completed its refurbishment. The interior has received a fabulous facelift. All areas have been repainted with a focus on colour therapy to create a relaxed, calm atmosphere. The overall feel is fresh, bright, contemporary and less “clinical”.

There are improvements throughout. These include themed bedrooms such as the seaside and woodlands. Each of our 6 bedrooms are unique and different, supporting a homely environment. All the flooring has been replaced with wood effect vinyl creating a warm, light feel. A local women’s craft group have been getting creative for us by way of making bunting and pompoms for the rooms. There are other

little touches, such as storytelling illustrations up the stairways courtesy of local illustrator and children’s author Simon Murray. The Kennet School provided prints of local places that the children will find familiar. We are very grateful for the support and generosity of local people.

All the feedback from young people and visitors on the refurbishment has been extremely positive. Work is continuing in the New Year when we will have two of our bathrooms refurbished.

The next newsletter will provide photos of the amazing changes happening here.

Autism with Lola



Autism is increasingly being seen in the public eye, and talked about in the media, but there is still a gap in teaching other children why some things are difficult for little ones like Lola, and how they can help and understand without compromising their own mental wellbeing.

With cuts across the education system, it's impossible for children to learn everything about the wider community, but even if we can't teach our children in lessons, we can do so through the art of storytelling; and that's what Autism with Love is all about.

Imagine a life where we needn't explain.

*A life where kids are happy
not being the same ...*

*... My name is Jodie Isitt,
and this is my dream.*

At the heart of this brand new initiative is Lola Rabbit (based on my daughter, Lola), along with a group of cute, but meaningful, woodland animals. These characters provide children with

learning resources and give them knowledge that is desperately needed in order to understand and accept differences.

They do so by taking the reader on an educational journey embracing differences and showing kindness. It is my passion to create gentle stories for young children, in the hope that it will explain what it is like to live with autism and anxiety and help shape a kinder and more inclusive future for the children of the next generation.

We NEED to teach children about disabilities and here's why.

When growing up as a little girl it was very rare to see a disabled person walking down the street or doing their shopping. Disabled people were segregated and no one spoke about it. No one taught young children why there were certain facial differences, behaviour difficulties or more physical disabilities such as multiple sclerosis for instance. I wasn't taught. I was scared and fearful and confused.

I was frightened of these differences and I avoided looking at people with disabilities, quite possibly crossing the road because of the discomfort of the unknown.

"What was the matter with them? Why are they different? Why did they just make that loud frightening noise?"

I would ask myself those questions in my head but I would never ask them out loud. It was almost like there was this unwritten rule that we shouldn't speak out loud in case people heard.

I would be devastated if an adult or child actively avoided my children because of their differences and this is why we have to start talking about them in schools and at home. We should be shaping the next generation into kinder, thoughtful and more understanding individuals who are inclusive.

We NEED to teach children about disabilities, and this beautifully written and illustrated story book does just that and more. In fact, it has proven to not only help children who are not neuro-divergent to understand those who are, but it has also helped autistic children understand themselves! This has led to them being able to start communicating their feelings to their parents and caregivers.

Parents were overwhelmed when their children started communicating to them their worries and feelings when previously they had never done this before. This then made me realise what a huge impact this book is having and my dream was coming true.



These children's books don't just help children understand others or accept themselves. They even have an 'Expert Section' designed to help parents, teachers and carers create discussion points in the home or the classroom to further enhance their learning experience. I wanted to ensure that all angles were covered within this book, I didn't want for any parent or carer to feel overwhelmed or concerned so I thought it was vital to have the expert section included.

All of these stories will contain very valuable and exciting advice from experts in this area such as occupational therapists and Speech and language therapists. Each contributor is extremely valued and dedicate their time for free in order to help promote inclusion in the classroom and at home.

www.autismwithlovepublishing.com

Are you a parent/carer of a child aged 0-5 with **SEND?**

Are you looking to meet other parents/carers to share ideas, experiences and challenges?

 Come along to our **Coffee Mornings**

Reading



2nd Monday
of the Month



Dingley's Promise
Reading, Kennet Walk
Community Centre,
Kennet Walk, Kenavon Drive,
RG1 3GD



9.30-10.30am

West Berkshire



3rd Saturday
of the Month



Dingley's Promise
Poplar Place, Shaw,
Newbury, RG14 1NA



10.30am-12.00pm

Wokingham



4th Monday
of the Month



Dingley's Promise
All Saints School
Norrey's Avenue, Wokingham
RG40 1UX



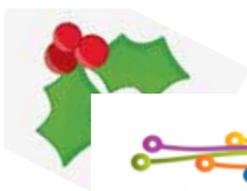
9.30-10.30am

Help us to help you by supporting each other!

Our coffee mornings are open to all parents/carers in the community who have a child aged 0-5 with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

We hope to see you there!





Brookfields
Specialist SEN School

Newsletter December 2019



OFSTED

Welcome to the Pathway to Employment newsletter, which is designed to keep our local business partners and other interested stake-holders up to date with the developments of our programme. 'Businesses have an important role to play in partnering with schools to raise ambition and achievement and improve performance. By becoming involved, employers can spell out the value of the skills and knowledge developed at school and open pupils' eyes to career opportunities. If you or someone you know would be interested in becoming a 'Pathway to Employment Partner' and supporting our students with new skills development or work based placements, then please do get in touch.

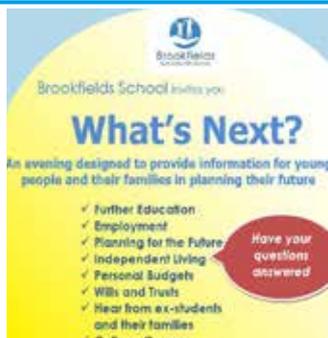
jgrant@brookfields.w-berks.sch.uk

lbellman@brookfields.w-berks.sch.uk

We are very pleased to let you know that Brookfields School has judged to be 'Outstanding' for the fourth consecutive Ofsted inspection. We are thrilled with this judgement particularly as under the new Inspection Framework, the bar to achieve Outstanding has been set even higher than before.



Recent Events



We have been busy attending conferences and welcoming other schools, colleges and careers service providers from across the country to our Pathway to Employment events. A great opportunity to come together and share knowledge and expertise.

Upcoming events



Next term we will be holding our Careers Week for our older students.
10th - 14th February 2020

We would really appreciate you getting in touch if you are able to offer our students any opportunities or insights into the world of work. We need you !!!!!!!



**Tuesdays, 24 Sep; 22 Oct; 19 Nov; 17 Dec; 14 Jan; 11Feb 2020
Community Parent/Carer Support Group, Greenham.**

A support group for family members who have children/young people with additional needs living within the community of Greenham and surrounding areas.

A safe and supportive space for sharing experiences and gaining support with the unique challenges faced by families of children with additional needs.

Each session will include a half hour talk about being a parent of a child with additional needs. The remainder of the session will be for discussion of the topic and social support time.

December 2019 Topic: Christmas craft and coping with Christmas.

DATE & TIME

See above for dates
12.30-2.30pm
Bring a packed lunch
(Refreshments provided)

VENUE

Greenham Community Centre,
The Nightingales
Newbury, RG14 7SZ

COST
FREE

BOOKING and Information:

**Charlie Taylor 07810 689679
supportgroups@parentingspecialchildren.co.uk**

Children welcome under parent supervision

funded
through



London
West



Parenting Special Children are a charity working with families of children and young people with special needs in Berkshire.

www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk

Autism Berkshire

Autism Berkshire is launching a new free course for parents and carers of autistic teenagers living in West Berkshire, and school staff who support their children.



Talking sense about autism.



Teen Life is an intensive course, running over six weekly sessions, to help parents and education professionals to understand more about autistic young people aged 10 to 16, discussing strategies and sharing ideas about how to communicate with and support these children.

Developed by the [National Autistic Society](#), the course covers topics including self-esteem, spending time with other people, stress and anxiety, understanding an autism diagnosis, puberty, independence, special interests and education and planning for the future.

Thanks to funding from West Berkshire Council's Community Education Fund and the Education & Skills Funding Agency, two courses will be run at the Swings & Smiles special needs playcentre, in Lower Way, Thatcham.

Course sessions will all take place on Mondays, from 12 noon to 2.30pm, as follows:

- January 27 to March 9 (no session on February 17, due to the half-term holiday).
- April 20 to June 1.

For more information about the Teen Life courses, see www.autismberkshire.org.uk/teen-life/

If you are interested in taking part, send an email, including a daytime telephone number, to contact@autismberkshire.org.uk and a member of Autism Berkshire's family support team will contact you for an informal discussion.

Autism Berkshire is also running more free autism advice workshops for West Berkshire parents and carers in Thatcham in early 2020, exploring different aspects of autism.

They will all take place at Thatcham Baptist Church, in Wheelers Green Way, on Wednesdays from 10am to 2.30pm, as follows:

- Understanding Autism: January 22.
- Meeting Sensory Needs: February 12.
- Managing Anger: March 11.

These workshops are open to parents and carers whose children have a diagnosis of autism or are on the Berkshire CAMHS waiting list for an autism assessment.

Visit their website for more information about these [workshops and how to register for free places](#), and if you have any questions, email contact@autismberkshire.org.uk

Autism Berkshire's family support worker for West Berkshire, Amanda Walker, is normally available to offer free drop-in advice about autism and the charity's services at the free coffee morning for parents and carers at the Swings & Smiles special needs playcentre, in Lower Way, Thatcham, on the first Friday of each month from 9.30am to 11am. Reminders are posted on the Autism Berkshire Facebook page ahead of these sessions.

Drop-in autism advice is also available to parents and carers from West Berkshire between 10am and 12.30pm on Tuesdays during school terms at Autism Berkshire's office at 40 Caversham Road, in Reading town centre. No appointment is needed to talk to a member of the family support team - just tell the building's reception staff that you are visiting Autism Berkshire.



**On Every Wednesday
From 11am-12pm
At Coley Park
Community Centre,
140 Wensley Rd,
Reading, RG1 6DW**

Do you have a child under 5 with special needs?

Swings & Smiles is a charity providing support, friendship and play for children with special needs and their families. We have a centre in Thatcham and now run Mini Mornings in Reading for children who are under 5 years old with special needs.

This group is a great way for parents to meet new people and for your child to play in a safe and fun environment. The sessions will be sensory based and we'll be bringing lots of fun toys and equipment and finishing with an interactive story each week.

The session costs **£2.50 per family** and siblings are welcome to come along too. While the group is for children with special needs, no formal diagnosis is required to attend.

If you would like to come to a Mini Morning please book in advance by emailing kellie@swingsandsmiles.co.uk or calling 01635 285170.

Registered Charity Number 1120598





When Every other
Wednesday 3.30-5.30pm
Where Swings & Smiles,
Lower Way, Thatcham
£5 per family

LEGO Club

Come and show off your building skills at our LEGO Club where you'll have the chance to build lots of different kits, get imaginative with your own creations, or take part in fun building challenges.

Our LEGO Club is a really relaxed and friendly group and any child with special needs is welcome to attend with their parents and siblings - they just need to enjoy building LEGO!

Our staff will be here to support and get you started with some building challenges each week. We're trained to deliver LEGO Therapy which we can offer to those who may benefit.

The next LEGO Club sessions will be taking place on:

23rd Oct, 6th Nov, 20th Nov, 4th Dec and 18th Dec

If you'd like to come along please book in advance by emailing office@swingsandsmiles.co.uk or calling 01635 285170.

Registered Charity Number 1120598



Supporting siblings of children with special needs

Everybody has a responsibility

A conference for professionals to identify ways in which we can help these young people fulfill their potential

When: Monday 27th January 2020

Where: Donnington Valley Hotel, Newbury

Who is it for: Any professionals working with children and families

How to book: [Visit our website to book your free ticket.](#) Places are limited

Sibling support at Swings & Smiles has grown hugely over the last few years and we now offer courses in schools as well as three sessions a month at the centre where the focus is around having fun with other siblings. The more contact we have with our families the more we are seeing that there is so much more that can be done for these children, not only by us but by other organisations and professionals too and we are keen to make this happen.

Earlier this year we conducted some research into the lives of siblings of children with special needs and now we'd like to invite professionals to hear the results, and the ways we've identified that we can all work together to support these young people. At the event you can expect to hear stories about the impact of growing up with a brother or sister with special needs from a parent's point of view and from some siblings themselves. There will also be the opportunity to have some group discussions around the topic and to work with other professionals to ensure we're all doing everything we can to support these young people in fulfilling their potential.

The event is free to attend but donations to our work are appreciated. Lunch and refreshments will be provided so let us know if you have any dietary requirements.

If you have any questions about the event please contact Sara on sibsupport@swingsandsmiles.co.uk

Parenting Special Children

Parenting Special Children work across Berkshire but have for many years been supporting families of children/young people with special needs. We offer [specialist parenting courses](#) in West Berkshire, a [monthly community support group](#) in Greenham for families living in that area.



[Pre and post ADHD assessment workshops](#)

[Pre and post Autism assessment workshops](#)

Their [annual report](#) is now available



Sunshine and Showers Group



Being the parent of a child with additional needs can be both rewarding and very hard work. Some days are full of sunshine, others you wait for the showers to pass.

Come on into the **CENTRAL FAMILY HUB THATCHAM** and talk with other parents about their own experiences and get information and support.



The next group meetings are on

Thursday Mornings

23rd Jan 20, 5th March 20, 7th May 20, 2nd July 20

9.15-11.15am

Melissa Hutchings the Autism Advisor for Families, West Berkshire,

Please come along if you have any questions for Melissa around autism / pre assessment concerns and stay for a coffee and chat

For further information contact:

Melissa.hutchings@westberks.gov.uk

or Tel: 01635 503646

All parents who have children with additional needs are welcome, little ones are also welcome however please bring toys with you to keep them entertained as the centre no longer has toys available.

Professionals and other Services / Organisations are also welcome to join us

Venue: Central Family Hub, Park Lane Building Thatcham RG18 3PG

Tel: 01635 865318



Sunshine and Showers Group



Being the parent of a child with additional needs can be both rewarding and very hard work. Some days are full of sunshine, others you wait for the showers to pass.

Come on into the **Downsway Primary Hub (Tilehurst)** and talk with other parents about their own experiences and get information and support.



The next group meetings are on

Thursday Mornings

16th Jan 20, 2nd April 20, 18th June 20

9.15-11.15am

Melissa Hutchings the Autism Advisor for Families, West Berkshire,

Please come along if you have any questions for Melissa around autism / pre assessment concerns and stay for a coffee and chat

For further information contact:

Melissa.hutchings@westberks.gov.uk
or **Melissa Hutchings** Tel: 01635 503646

All parents who have children with additional needs are welcome, little ones are also welcome however please bring toys with you to keep them entertained as the centre no longer has toys available.

Professionals and other Services / Organisations are also welcome to join us

Venue: Downsway Primary School Hub, Warbreck Drive, Tilehurst, Berks RG31 6FE



Parent Workshops for SEND Families and those waiting for an ASD assessment.

Being run in partnership with



6th Feb 20 – Understanding and Supporting Self-Regulation Skills in Young People

30th April 20 – Understanding Behaviour and how best to support our young people with a Therapeutic approach.

11th June 20 – Sensory Processing Difficulties – What does it mean and how can we help.

Time: 9.45am to 12noon **Venue:** Mencap Centre, Enbourne Rd, Newbury

All workshops are run by Melissa Hutchings – Autism Advisor for Families

Please contact Admin to book a place on: **01635 503646**
Or email Learning Support Team
LearningSupportTeam@westberks.gov.uk

Family Dog Workshops

Workshops for parents/carers of a child ages between 3 - 16 years old with a clinical diagnosis of autism.



Family Dog Workshops are ideal if you:

- Are at the early stages of considering getting a dog to help your autistic child
- Know that you want to get a dog and are looking for help choosing and handling a dog
- Already have a pet dog but would like training ideas and support

The series of three one day workshops use a combination of practical demonstrations, discussions, hands on learning and course hand outs.

Following the workshops, ongoing support is available to families including online resources, and a private Facebook group.

For dates and venues visit:
www.dogsforgood.org/family-dog



January at Swings & Smiles



		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6th January	Music Club 3.30-5.30pm - Over 8s, £50 per term	7th January Family Play 3.30-5.30pm - £5 per family	8th January Community Session 9.30-11am - £2.50 per family Reading Minis 11-12.30 - email kellie@swingsandsmiles.co.uk for more info	1st January Centre Closed	2nd January Centre Closed	3rd January Interactive Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	4th January Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	5th January Relaxed Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family
13th January	Music Club 3.30-5.30pm - Over 8s, £50 per term	14th January Mini Morning 10-11.30am - Under 5s, Free Family Play 3.30-5.30pm-£5 per family	15th January Community Session 9.30-11am - £2.50 per family Reading Minis 11am-12.30pm After School Activities 3.30-5.30 - £5 per family	1st January Centre Closed	2nd January Centre Closed	3rd January Interactive Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	4th January Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	5th January Relaxed Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family
20th January	Music Club 3.30-5.30pm - Over 8s, £50 per term	21st January Family Play 3.30-5.30pm-£5 per family Health and Wellbeing Group 7-9.30pm	22nd January Community Session 9.30-11am - £2.50 per family Reading Minis 11am-12.30pm	1st January Centre Closed	2nd January Centre Closed	3rd January Interactive Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	4th January Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	5th January Relaxed Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family
27th January	Music Club 3.30-5.30pm - Over 8s, £50 per term	28th January Family Play 3.30-5.30pm - £5 per family	29th January Community Session 9.30-11am - £2.50 per family Reading Minis 11am-12.30pm After School Activities 3.30-5.30 - £5 per family	1st January Centre Closed	2nd January Centre Closed	3rd January Interactive Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	4th January Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family	5th January Relaxed Family Play 10am-12pm - £5 per family

All sessions must be booked in advance by calling **01635 285170** or emailing **office@swingsandsmiles.co.uk**.
If it's your first time visiting or if you're unsure about which sessions are right for you, get in touch and we'll be happy to discuss this with you.

