Check out new West Berkshire Directory

Free online guide has information, advice and support that’s available across the district for adults, families and children

WEST Berkshire – a great place to live with great amenities. Do you know what’s on offer for you and your family?

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.

The answers to all these questions, and more, are now available at the touch of a button in the newly formed West Berkshire Directory, which brings together details of the Adult Social Care Information Point, the Family Information Service and SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities).

The directory is free, 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.

So, for adults, there’s 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.

The other two sections of the directory contain details of the Family Information and the SEND service, which supports families with children and young people aged from 0-25.

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

You can email directory@westberks.gov.uk or phone (01635) 80100 for more help.

The directory has been redesigned by Mary Blackett from adult social care and Wendy Neighbour from the Family Information Service and the local officer.

Kamal Bahia, who chairs the Patient and Public Engagement Group for the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board, has been working closely with her colleagues and is championing the launch of the directory.

Mrs Bahia said: “We know from talking to people, especially those caring for children or adults, that they often don’t know where to go for help, or they are pushed from pillar to post when they start making phone calls.

“All this can be very frustrating and upsetting when you are sometimes at your wits end and need support.

“The directory is easy to use and gives people that important first point of contact in the health and social care system.

“There’s a huge amount of advice and support out there along with so many organisations and community groups running events and activities in our area.

“I hope the directory gives people the first step towards accessing all this knowledge and all these networks.”

Councillor Graham Bridgman, from West Berkshire Council, said: “The West Berkshire Directory is a free, online, one-stop shop that provides information, advice and support on a wide range of topics and services for adults, families and children across the district.

“The directory provides support for all of our residents who might need assistance, including those who sometimes don’t know where to turn to for help.

“As well as signposting a wide range of services for adults (local groups or leisure activities, assistance in staying in your own home, carer home and supported living advice etc) the range of information provided regarding education, health and social care for children and young people, in particular those who have special educational needs or disabilities, is excellent.

“The directory brings together a lot of information and I’m sure residents throughout West Berkshire will find it very useful.”

You can find the directory at https://directory.westberks.gov.uk. If you are a local organisation or community group providing a service or activities for anyone living in West Berkshire, you can submit your own entry into the directory and will be responsible for maintaining its accuracy.

All GP practices in the local area are working towards signposting patients towards the directory and have a dedicated section on their website.

THE West Berkshire Directory has been launched to coincide with National Carers Week, which runs from June 10 to 16.

A number of events have been lined up across West Berkshire to treat carers to a well-earned break and to thank them for the great work they do day in and day out supporting a family member or friend in need of help.

They are:

- Crossroads Care is hosting an indoor fete for carers and the cared-for on Monday, June 10, from 2pm to 4pm in Broadway House, 40-44 The Broadway, Newbury.

If you would like to attend call Crossroads Care on 01635 20068 or email carers@oxfordshirecrossroads.org.uk

- Reading and West Berkshire Carers Hub will host three events – for carers only – on Monday, June 10: Craft event – card making, 1pm to 3pm in Frank Hutchings Hall, Thatcham.

Tell us what you think by emailing Kamal Bahia, chair of Patient and Public Engagement Group, West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board – ppe.chair@nhs.net