

Welcome pack



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Introduction

Welcome to West Berkshire! We want you to feel welcome and safe in our beautiful district. To help you, we've created this pack to help you learn more about our area and all the parts that make up day to day life in the UK.

Contents	Page
About West Berkshire	2
Your Health and Wellbeing	
● Finding a GP, if you are unwell	3
● Use the right service, Prescriptions, Vaccinations	4
● Covid-19 Vaccinations, Dentists, Opticians	5
● Pregnancy & Young Children, Living with Disabilities	6
● Mental Health	7
● Sport & Leisure	8
Education	
● Applying for School for 4 to 16 year olds	9
● Early Years & Childcare	10
● Adult Education	11
Your pets	11
Finance, Benefits and Banking	12
Travel and Transport	13
Ukraine Support Groups and self-help	14

About West Berkshire

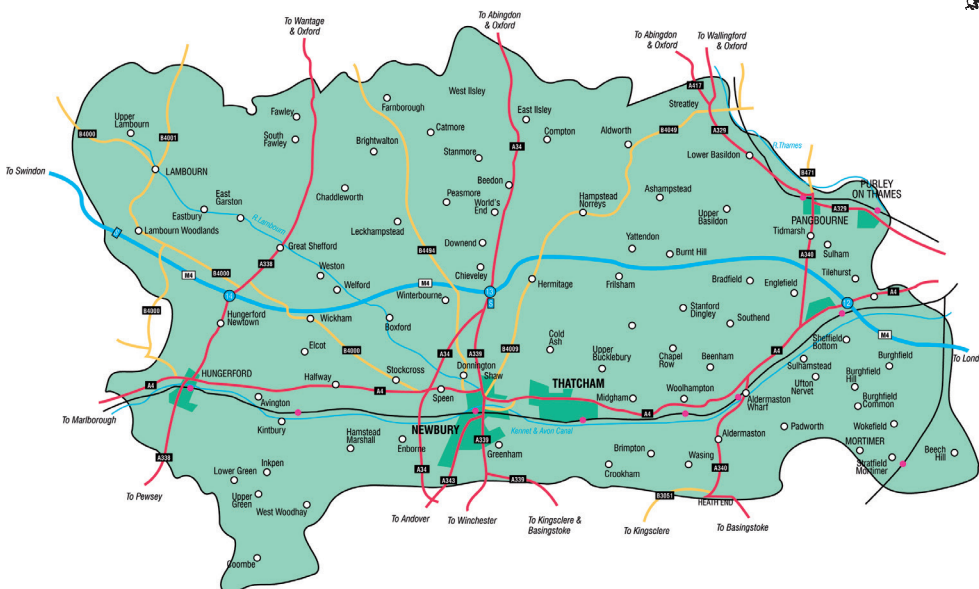
It is a mainly rural area with the town of Newbury as the central hub for shopping and transport links. It also has smaller towns that serve their communities with a range of shops, including Hungerford to the west and Theale to the east.

It is 50 miles west of the centre of London and 70 miles east of Bristol; the two cities are connected by the M4 motorway that runs through the district. It is 30 miles south of Oxford and 45 miles north of Southampton; these are connected by the M3 and A34 roads, giving West Berkshire strong transport links to other parts of the UK. 10 miles to the east is Reading, which railway station links to the North of the UK and has direct trains to Heathrow Airport. Heathrow is 35 miles away by the M4 motorway.

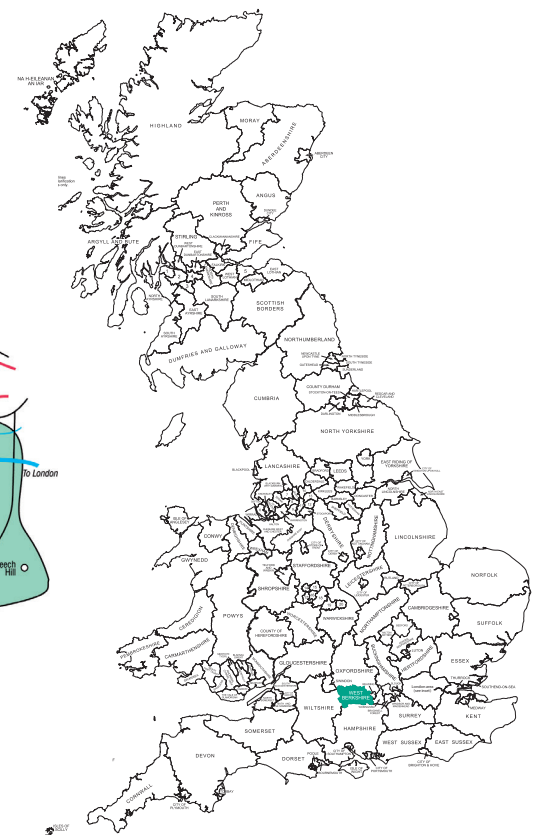
The area has three Members of Parliament representing it, Laura Farris, Alok Sharma, and John Redwood representing the Conservative Party.

The district has a wide range of employers, with a wide and diverse range of jobs available. Vodafone has its head office just outside Newbury. The area around the M4 motorway is known as a technology hub, with many national and global companies having their headquarters nearby. The rural parts of the district are dominated by farmland, and to the west of the area, Lambourn is the second most important centre for the racehorse industry in the UK.

Map of West Berkshire



West Berkshire on a UK map



Your Health and Wellbeing

We know how important it is to look after your and your family's health; we hope this section will show you how easy it is to do in West Berkshire.

You need to register with a GP as soon as possible.

GP surgeries are usually the first contact for any health problems you might have. They can give advice, prescribe medication and complete simple treatments in their surgery. They also refer you to other NHS services if you require further treatment.

- Anyone in England can register with a GP surgery.
- It's free to register.
- You do not need proof of address or immigration status, ID or an NHS number.

You might be able to register with a GP surgery that's not in the area you live. Some surgeries offer more services than others and might better meet your needs, such as someone in your family who has a specific health condition.

You can search online here - <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp>

If you are feeling unwell, you have three options;

Self-care

You can buy pain relief from pharmacies and most supermarkets; they will also stock a wide range of medications for aches, pains and mild infections that you would not need to see a GP for. By visiting a pharmacy, you can also ask to speak to the Pharmacist if you need more advice on what to do.

Non-Urgent Medical Help

If you still feel unwell after doing the above, you should book an appointment to see your GP; they are usually open Monday to Friday.

If it is outside of this time, and you need advice on what you should do, you get medical online at the NHS 111 service - <https://111.nhs.uk/>, or you can **call 111** for advice. You can ask for an interpreter when you call 111 if you need it.

Either your GP or the NHS team online or by phone can advise you on what to do next. They can arrange help, or even call an ambulance.

Urgent or Emergency Medical Help

If possible, you should arrange for someone to take you to the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) unit. If the emergency is not something you feel comfortable dealing with, call **999** and ask for an ambulance.

By calling **999** or **112** the emergency services will help you and locate you if you are unsure where you are. When the ambulance gets to you, they will decide what is best for your care.

If you go to A&E you will be assessed and asked to wait.

A&E departments are usually busy, and people are not seen in the order that they arrive but on the seriousness of their condition, you may have to wait some time to be treated.

Don't forget if the situation is very serious, for example a heart attack, always call **999** or **112** immediately.

Use the Right Service



 Self Care Care for yourself at home Minor cuts & grazes Minor bruises Minor sprains Coughs and colds	 Pharmacy Local expert advice Minor illnesses Headaches Stomach upsets Bites & stings	 NHS 111 Non-emergency help Feeling unwell? Unsure? Anxious? Need help?	 GP Advice Out of hours: Call 111 Persistent symptoms Chronic pain Long term conditions New prescriptions	 UTCs Urgent Treatment Centres Breaks & sprains X-rays Cuts & grazes Fever & rashes	 A&E or 999 For emergencies only Choking Chest pain Blacking out Serious blood loss
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Prescriptions for Medication

Your GP or hospital often send a prescription request for medication to a chosen pharmacy. When you collect the prescription, you will be asked if you are eligible for free prescriptions or if you usually must pay.

If you must pay the full amount, the current cost of a prescription in England is £9.35. However, you may not have to pay due to age, income or medical exemption.

Find out if you can get free prescriptions using the link below:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/who-can-get-free-prescriptions/

Vaccinations

Vaccines are safe and effective. Many routine vaccinations are offered on the NHS. It is important that you get the right vaccines on time for the best protection for yourself and your loved ones.

Babies, toddlers and schoolchildren will be offered vaccinations via their GPs or at schools when they become eligible.

More information is available to view at (available in Russian and Ukrainian):

www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-information-for-migrants/moved-to-the-uk-migrant-immunisation

The **seasonal influenza vaccine** (or the “flu jab”) is offered every year to help protect people at risk of flu and its complications. It is suitable for children and adults. Some people can have it for free from the NHS.

The **Covid-19 vaccine** is another important vaccine. It is free on the NHS for everyone living in the UK. Most adults should get two doses and a booster.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

Getting vaccinated is your best defence against the virus and will help protect you, your family and those you care for.

It's not just about protecting you. Many people have conditions preventing them from developing an effective immune response to vaccination, making them vulnerable to Covid-19.

The Covid-19 vaccine is helping to reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives; it also reduces pressure on the NHS and social care services.

You can discuss details with a pharmacist or your GP.

You can view information (available in Russian and Ukrainian):

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-easy-read-resources

You can book your vaccination:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/

Dentists

You are entitled to NHS dentistry. Some treatments are offered at a reduced rate for NHS patients, and some are free.

NHS dentistry is free when:

- The treatment is minor (i.e. to remove stitches, stop bleeding in the mouth or repair dentures)
- The patient is under the age of 18
- The patient is under the age of 19 and in full-time education
- The patient is pregnant or has had a baby in the last 12 months

Some dentists are private, so you will have to pay their set prices. Some practices offer the option of both NHS and private dentistry.

To find your local dentist use this link:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist

For more information on dental charges use this link:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/understanding-nhs-dental-charges

For Dental Emergencies, you can call 111, which will provide details of dental practices providing Urgent Dental NHS care.

Finding an Optician

You can find many Opticians in town centres. You can also search online by using the NHS site -

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician>

If you are pregnant or have children under 5 years old

If you are pregnant or think you might be, tell your GP, who will arrange for you to have your first appointment with your midwife.

A midwife is a health professional who cares for you during pregnancy, during birth and for you as a mother with your newborn baby.

As soon as you know you are pregnant, you will be put in touch with the NHS midwife service, they will support you during this time, including discussing vaccinations, scans and childbirth options.

They will be with you during the birth of your baby, or they will hand you over to a colleague, depending on the birthing process and the length of labour.

They will also provide you with notes to take to your new home if you move before the birth.

If you already have a baby or children under 5, a Health Visitor will meet your family once you have registered with a GP.

They are specialist community public health nurses, registered midwives or nurses.

They work with you to support you and your children's health and wellbeing. They will help you from giving birth, provide support with breastfeeding, infant feeding and healthy eating, provide advice on minor illnesses, safe sleeping and accident prevention.

They will also give you advice on vaccinations.

Living with Disabilities, visible and hidden

Once you are registered with your GP, and they have accessed your needs, they can advise you on how to get the correct equipment and support to help you with your disabilities; this could range from wheelchairs to hearing aids, or medication.

If you need medical procedures at your home, please discuss this with your GP, who may arrange for a nurse to visit and assess your needs at home.

What is mental health and wellbeing?

We know that having good mental health is essential as your physical health.

Mental health and wellbeing is about how we feel, our thoughts, emotions and how we cope. Your mental wellbeing might change when your life circumstances change, and you experience different things in your life. We know that you might need help now even though you have felt fine before.

In the UK, it is acceptable to talk about mental distress and seek help from others if you need it. We are here to help you.

What are mental health problems?

There are times when we might feel upset, stressed or scared. It is very common for people seeking asylum or who have had to become a refugee to feel these emotions. These feelings will pass most of the time. We know this depends on the person, what has happened in the past, and what might happen.

Some of the things that can cause mental health problems are:

- feeling overwhelmed with life
- where we live
- poor physical health
- stress at work
- bad things that have happened to us
- not knowing our rights
- the asylum process

Mental health problems are common and more openly discussed now. One in four people experiences a mental health problem every year. Some common mental health problems include; depression, anxiety and low mood.

If you are struggling and it affects how you feel and coping with daily life, please seek help.

Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling. Sometimes sharing your feelings can help lift some of the weight you might feel.

Speak to your GP if you have noticed changes in how you think or feel over the past few weeks or months. Each on their own might not be an issue, but they could be a concern together. They might include:

- loss of appetite
- feeling low or anxious
- thinking negative thoughts about yourself
- irritability
- finding it hard to concentrate
- not enjoying life as much as you once did
- trouble sleeping
- finding it hard to do day-to-day life such as washing or eating

They can recommend what might be best for you now, including medication (anti-depressants), counselling, or refer you to a specialist service.

We have links to information that can help on the West Berkshire website, including support groups. You can find more here - <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/mentalhealthandwellbeing>

You can get help by using Talking Therapies, which you can directly use without having to be referred by your GP - <https://talkingtherapies.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/>

Some apps for your phone offer free guided meditation content, Headspace - <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19> and Calm - <https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath>

If you are under 18, you can call Childline on 0800 1111 to talk to someone, there is no charge for this service.

The Samaritans offer a safe place to talk at any time. You can call them on 116 123. You can also reach out to them through other forms too -

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Mind is a mental health charity that offers many different services. You can find out more here -

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

or you can email them info@mind.org.uk or call them on 0300 123 3393 9am-6pm Monday to Friday

Sports and Leisure

Keeping physically healthy

One of the best ways not to visit a GP is to look after yourself and keep healthy by eating well, taking regular exercise, and relaxing if possible.

The NHS has more information about all these elements, which you can find here -

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

These include advice on exercise, sleeping well, stopping smoking and much more.

There are many activities to take part in across West Berkshire, staying healthy and having fun, you can find out more here - <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/physicalactivity>

Leisure Centres

There are also many Leisure Centres across the district, they provide a range of facilities, from swimming pools to football pitches, and gyms, you can find out more about our centres here -

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/27501/Sports-and-Leisure-Centres>

Play Parks and Open Spaces for all ages

Across West Berkshire, there are many dedicated play parks for children, two of which are award-winning, you can find out more about them here - <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/parks>

We also have lots of beautiful areas in which to walk, and cycle, we have a page on our website sharing the maps for these routes, which you can find here -

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/countrysideroutes>

Education for all, including learning to speak English

4 to 16 year olds and applying for School Places

All children between the age of 4 and 16 need to be in full-time education; depending on their age, they will need to attend different schools.

In West Berkshire, we have four different schools of age range for our children to go to:

Infant Schools

For children aged between 4 and 7 years – born between 01 September 2014 and 31 August 2017.

There are three year groups in Infant schools, Reception Year, Year 1 and 2.

Junior Schools

For children aged between 7 and 11 years – born between 01 September 2010 and 31 August 2014.

There are four year groups in junior schools. Years 3 to 6.

Primary Schools

For children aged between 4 and 11 years– born between 01 September 2010 and 31 August 2017.

There are seven year groups in primary schools, Reception Year, Year 1 to 6.

Secondary Schools

For children aged between 11 and 18 years– born between 01 September 2003 and 31 August 2010.

There are five compulsory year groups in secondary schools, Years 7 to 11 are for children aged between 11 and 16.

There are two non-compulsory year groups, Years 12 and 13 are for children aged between 17 and 19, but there are entry requirements. Pupils must have achieved certain grades in the previous education stage to be accepted. Parents need to contact the schools to apply.

You can find a list of all the schools in West Berkshire here -

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/findaschool>

Applying for a school place

To apply for your child to join a school as soon as possible, please follow this link -

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/inyearadmissions>

If your child will be ready to start Infant or Primary School in September (if your child's date of birth is between 01/09/2017 and 31/08/2018), or for a place in a Junior School in Year 3 in September (if your child's date of birth is between 01/09/2014 and 31/08/2015) please follow this link -

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/primaryadmissions>

What you need to apply for your child's school place

You will need the following to apply for a place:

A copy of your child's Passport- you only need to provide the picture page

A copy of permission letter from UK Visa and Immigrations (UKVI)

Evidence of address, either:

Home for Ukraine – Sponsors details

Ukraine Family scheme - Family member's details and letter from the liable person on council tax

If you need help with applying

You can contact the school admissions team if you have any questions:

- Email admissions@westberks.gov.uk
- Or call 01635 5191111 and ask to speak to someone in the school admissions team.

Early Years Childcare and Education in West Berkshire

In England you can get help towards childcare depending on your circumstances, including:

- Free childcare places for children aged 3 and 4.
- Extra free childcare if you are working and your child is aged 3 and 4.
- Free childcare if your child is 2 and you are on a very low income.

You may also be able to get money off your childcare bills if you are working or are on Universal Credit.

To find out more, please visit -

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/28215/Childcare-and-Support-for-Children>

You can find out more about the other services that we supply, for example, the Family Hub.

Family Hubs offer a range of services to support families, parents and carers of children aged 0 to 19 years old (0-24 for SEND).

Families with under 5s can access the following:

- 1-1 support from a Family Support Worker, families can self-refer or be referred by a professional
- A variety of groups running in the Hubs and in the local community, enabling children, parents carers to take part in range of play-based activities to support early learning and development, socialise and build friendships
- Support with finding suitable provision and applying for 2yr & 30hr funding.
- Friendly, qualified staff who will provide a listening ear to support your child's learning & development and parent/carer wellbeing
- Signposting for information around employment, training, childcare

For 5 to 19 year olds we offer signposting and information.

Our Specialist Family Information Officer can also help you find childcare places for childcare.

You can email them at fis@westberks.gov.uk or telephone them on 01635 503100 or contact earlyyearsservice@westberks.gov.uk or telephone them on 01635 503500.

All areas of England have a Family Information Service. You can find out more here <https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare> and this covers the whole of the UK.

Childcare Choices is a helpful website to take you through your options - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> for childcare and early education in the UK.

Adult Education and learning English

You are eligible for Public Funded English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)/English courses through Educafe and Berkshire School of English.

You can sign up for these courses by following the links below:

Educafe - <https://form.jotform.com/EDUCAFE/educafe-language-support-course-reg>

Berkshire School of English -

<https://berkshireschoolofenglish.co.uk/forms/course-application-form/>

Your pets

You might have your pets with you, and we know that they are an important part of your family.

It would be best to get your pets checked by a Vet as soon as possible.

If you have any information on their vaccination status, it will be very helpful.

All pets will be required to complete a blood test to detect rabies vaccinations will reduce the time pets need to spend in quarantine.

The Government will cover the costs of any necessary stays in quarantine for the pets of those fleeing Ukraine.

Pets will be considered on a case by case basis, with a shortened quarantine period for those that are vaccinated. The maximum quarantine stay for a pet that has received no rabies vaccination is four months. We are working with vets and quarantine facilities to make sure that the process does not delay the arrival of Ukrainians in the UK to make arrangements for their pets.

Finance, Benefits and Banking

Being sponsored, you can stay in the UK for up to three years, and during that time, you can work and claim benefits.

Host families will receive £350 per month from the UK Government. The monthly amount does not cover rent or utility costs. Guests must not be charged rent but could be charged utility costs if the host wants to.

A host household currently in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction should notify the Benefits section of this change to your household and income (benefits@westberks.gov.uk or via <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/housingbenefit>). Although this should not affect existing entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, it is essential to notify the Benefits section to comply with statutory duties and prevent queries from arising in the future.

Ukraine guests will receive an initial £200 payment to support them until benefits or earnings from a job are in place. We will confirm how this will be paid to you when the home visit takes place. For further information, please see the FAQs at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>

You are eligible for the following benefits immediately:

- Universal Credit
- Jobs support

These will help you get established within the community, find school places for your children and give you a chance to find a job that matches your experience.

You may also be eligible for:

- Housing Benefit*
- Pension Credit
- Personal Independence Payment
- Child Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Contributions-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) are also available for those Ukrainians who meet the criteria.

**Please note that Housing Benefit assists with rent. You cannot claim Housing Benefit whilst residing with a host family as you should not be charged rent for this accommodation.*

You can also find general information and useful links relating to Universal Credit on the Council's website at: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/universalcredit>

You can find contact information and general information relating to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/housingbenefit>

To make a claim, you should start by calling the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on **0800 169 0310** and ask to speak to your local Jobcentre, either Newbury or Reading. DWP have Job Coaches at the Jobcentre who can help people make claims online either over the phone or in person. They can arrange an appointment to do this when you call them. The Jobcentre can also arrange an interpreter to assist with claims over the phone or in person.

Newbury Job Centre address:
Cromwell House, 22 Oxford Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 1JB

You can find the opening times for Newbury Job Centre here -
<https://www.jobcentrerearne.com/jobcentre/newbury-jobcentre-plus/>

Citizens Advice can also support people in claiming benefits over the phone. Their Help to Claim service can be reached on: **0800 144 8444**

Citizens Advice West Berkshire can offer other support but will not be able to assist directly with claims for benefits. You can find their contact details here:
<https://citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk/getting-help/>

Opening Bank Accounts

To receive benefits and wages and make payments, you will need to open a UK bank account. Many banks have special accounts created for you to be able to do this quickly:

Royal Bank of Scotland - <https://www.rbs.co.uk/ukraine-refugees.html>

Santander - <https://www.santander.co.uk/personal/ukraine-support>

NatWest - <https://www.natwest.com/ukraine-refugees.html>

Travel and transport

If you have a Ukrainian driving licence, you can exchange it for a UK licence for a small fee, as Ukraine has an exchange agreement with the UK. Find out how to exchange a foreign driving licence on the GOV.UK website, here - <https://www.gov.uk/exchange-foreign-driving-licence>

Rail operators are providing Ukrainian refugees with a single onward journey via national rail to their final destination, free of charge on arrival in the UK. You have 48 hours to make your onward journey. You only need to show a Ukrainian passport and a boarding pass, or ticket showing arrival into the country, within the last 48 hours. You can find more information on the National Rail Enquiries website - <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ukr-travel.aspx>

Ukraine Support Groups and self-help

Sometimes, guidance can change, and getting that information to you as quickly as possible sometimes makes it easier to get that information online.

We recommend that if you need the latest information, you use this link to the UK Governments Welcome Guide - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk>

For FAQs you can visit this page - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions>

We also have two pages on our website with further information, one for those arriving from Ukraine - <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/ukrainenationals> and a page for the hosts - <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/homesforukraine>

Both hosts and guests can access support from our **Ukraine Support Hub**. The Hub can offer signposting and information about social care, access to employment, school places and other council services.

You can contact the Hub by phoning **01635 503579** or by emailing ukraine@westberks.gov.uk

There are also other official routes to receive support, including the British Red Cross - www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee/help-for-refugees-from-ukraine and also Citizens Advice - <https://citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk/>

We aim to make the transition to being in the UK as smooth as possible; everyone needs more support sometimes.

Working with Voluntary groups across the district, we hope that some of the links below will enable both Hosts and Sponsors;

West Berkshire's Community Life Connected Map

<https://wb-communitymap.adoddle.org/>

This website can help you find groups close to use, by either searching or using the map to zoom in, the events and groups are being updated constantly.

West Berkshire Ukraine Support

www.westberkshireukrainesupport.com

This website is available to read in English or Ukrainian and features information such as community transport, and language tuition. It is also being regularly updated to ensure that everyone is kept up to date.