

# SHARED LIVES News

February 2026

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## Dear Shared Lives Carers,



I hope you have all kept to your new year's resolutions.

I hope you all had a very festive break and looking forward to the year ahead.



West Berkshire  
COUNCIL

## Dates for the diary

**I** - individual

**V** - Voices

**I** -In a

**C** -Community of people

**T**- That

**U** - Use the

**S** -Service



Next date for the INVICTUS group meeting

On

**Thursday 19th February at 6.30pm**

We will be joined by Kirstie Rainbow who is coming to have a chat with us about the West Berkshire Council service directory which has lots of useful information she is going to show us how to use it, we can then see all the different things that are available to us in the local community.

If you would like to get involved, please email or call Becky  
**becky.stephenson@westberks.gov.uk 01635 503357**

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### Next Carer meeting

**18th March 2026 at 3pm**

If you would like to get involved or like anything discussed, please email Sadie on **sadie.o'reilly@westberks.gov.uk**

# Health and safety in the kitchen



## Fire and Heat Safety

- Never leave cooking unattended: The primary cause of kitchen fires is unattended cooking. If you must leave the room, turn off the hob or oven.
- Keep the area clear: Ensure tea towels, cloths, curtains, and electrical leads are kept well away from the hob and oven.
- Handle hot oil with care:
- Use a thermostat-controlled deep fat fryer instead of a chip pan, as they are safer.
- If oil starts to smoke, turn off the heat and let it cool
- Never use water on an oil or fat fire; smother it with a fire blanket or a thick, damp cloth.
- Clean regularly: A build-up of fat and grease in the oven, grill, or on the hob can easily ignite, keep them clean.
- Wear appropriate clothing: Avoid wearing loose, baggy clothing that could catch fire easily when near the hob.

## Knife and Equipment Safety

- Proper handling: Always carry a knife with the point facing towards the floor.
- Cut or chop on a cutting board, never in your hand. Never, try to catch a knife if you drop it.
- Keep knives sharp: Sharp knives are safer than blunt ones because they require less pressure and are less likely to slip.
- Wash safely: Do not place knives in a washing-up bowl full of soapy water where they cannot be seen; wash them immediately.
- Use the right tools: Never use a metal knife or fork to retrieve stuck toast from a plugged-in toaster.

## Electrical Safety

- Positioning: Keep electrical appliances and their leads away from water sources like the sink.
- Avoid overloading: Do not overload plug sockets with too many appliances, which can lead to overheating.
- Unplug when not in use: Unplug small appliances like kettles and toasters when not in use, and before cleaning or repairing them.
- Register appliances: Registering your appliances allows manufacturers to contact you in case of any safety recalls or faults. You can do this via the Register My Appliance campaign website.

Hygienic food preparation tips

When preparing food it can easily be contaminated with bacteria if you're not careful.

To prepare food hygienically:

- Always wash hands before you start
- Keep surfaces clean
- Use colour-coded chopping boards for different types of food
- Don't wash raw meat - this just spreads bacteria around the sink
- Keep long hair tied back
- Follow any preparation instructions included on the packet
- Don't taste food with your fingers or use the same spoon
- Use separate utensils for raw and cooked foods

Be sure to clean food preparation areas with anti-bacterial surface cleaner and a clean cloth after you're done.

High Speed Training

Hygienic food preparation

www.highspeedtraining.co.uk

# Equality and diversity



## February Awareness and events 2026

- 1 – World hijab day
- 4 – World cancer day
- 5 – Time to talk day
- 5-11 – UK race equality week
- 10 – Safer internet day
- 11 – International Day of Women and girls in science

## March Awareness and events 2026

- 1 – Zero discrimination day
- 1 – International wheelchair day
- 3 – World hearing day
- 8 – International Women's Day
- 15 – Mother's Day
- 16-22 – Neurodiversity celebration week
- 21 – World down syndrome day
- 31 – International trans day of visibility

## The Lots of Socks campaign

On **21 March**, simply pick your most eye-catching socks. They might be mismatched socks or your boldest and most colourful socks, whatever takes your fancy!

The idea is to start a conversation, so when people ask you about your socks, you can tell them, "I'm wearing them to raise awareness of Down syndrome".

Then, you can tell them everything you want them to know about Down syndrome.

Get noticed and start a conversation about **#WorldDownSyndromeDay**.



Safer Internet Day 2026 will take place on the **10th of February 2026**, with celebrations and learning based around the theme **'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI'**.

# Meet the person

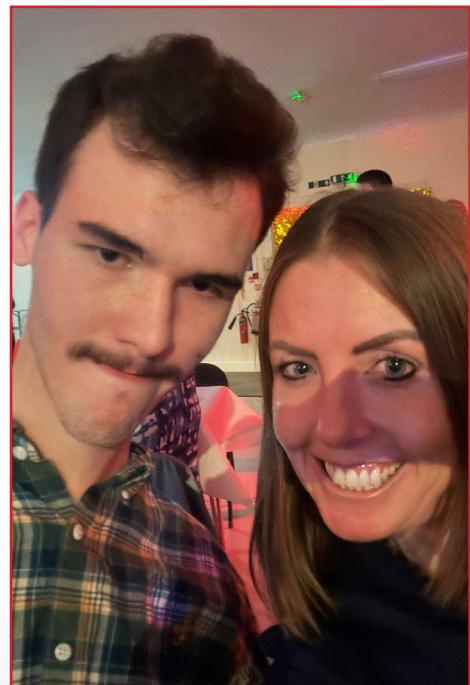
Chris Baker having a day out in London to the Titanic Museum with his Shared Lives Carer John and Johns family friend Nobby, Chris said he really enjoyed his day out.



# Shared Lives Christmas party



On 5th December we had our West Berkshire Shared Lives Scheme Christmas party at Frank Hutchins Hall in Thatcham. Along with a fish and chip supper we had prizes for the best decorated table, karaoke, and dance competition. The event was really well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all.





“John had a really good time in Portugal. He’s not stopped talking about it! It’s the first time he’s been on holiday without his family.”



# TURN DREAMS INTO MEMORIES

## SUPPORTED HOLIDAYS FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

We have over 30 years' experience providing fully supported UK and worldwide holidays with a wide choice of relaxing, adventurous, cultural and fun-packed breaks.

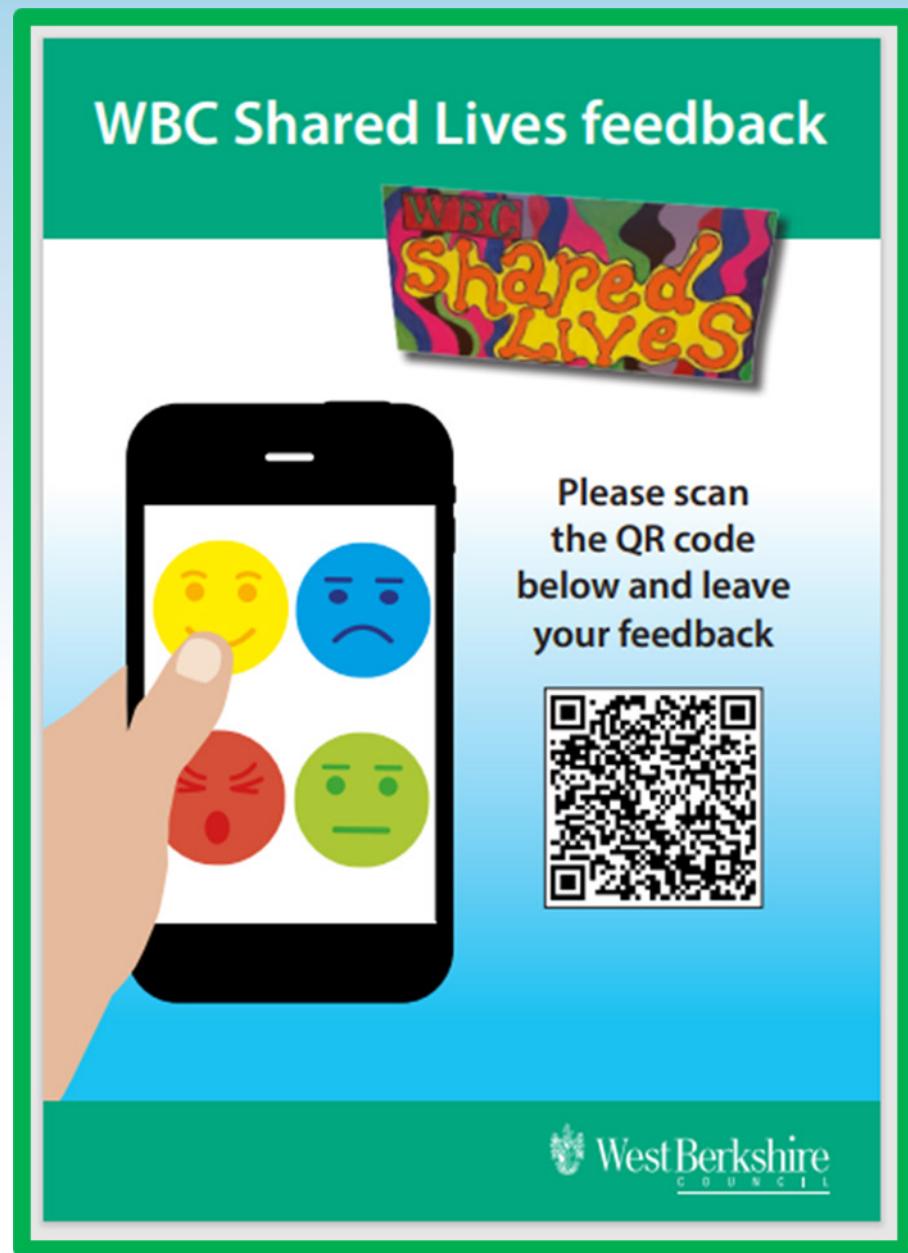
We support you every step of the way so you can relax, have fun, and enjoy new experiences with new friends.



office@optionsolidays.co.uk | 01285 740491

OPTIONSHOLIDAYS.CO.UK





If you have any news that you would like us to include in the newsletter or you would like to appear in Caspers corner with your pets. Please contact Mel Jones [mel.jones@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:mel.jones@westberks.gov.uk)

## Contact numbers

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