

Your Health

Update for patients and the public in Berkshire West
(Includes West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading)



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Female Plasma Donors Expected To Increase

Reading's [Plasma Donor Centre](#) has recently taken delivery of new 'female friendly' donor machines, meaning that more local women are now able to donate plasma.

The previous machines had height and weight restrictions that ruled out most women, with the result that only 7 per cent of plasma donors at the Reading Centre, were female.

Previously, a 5ft 4in (163 cm) woman had to weigh 12 stone 8lbs (80 kg) to make a plasma donation. The new machines mean that a woman of the same height only needs to weigh 9 stone (57 kg) to make a donation.

Plasma is the part of your blood that carries platelets, red blood cells and white blood cells around the body. Medicines made from plasma save and transform the lives of over 17,000 people in England each year, including people with cancers, rare diseases, immune disorders and genetic conditions.

[How to donate plasma](#)

Travelling Abroad?

You can now obtain a digital NHS Covid pass for children in England aged 5 to 11 for travelling abroad.

[Further information on obtaining the NHS Covid pass and online request form for children under 18.](#)



ChatHealth Confidential Support and Advice

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has recently launched ChatHealth, a confidential texting service aimed at supporting more parents/carers and young people with conversations about health and wellbeing.

ChatHealth will enable support to be given to parents/carers and young people earlier, thereby preventing problems from escalating. Designated staff members run the service Monday-Friday (09:00-16:30) and aim to answer all messages within 24 hours.

For more information on this new service please go to:

- [Health Visiting | Children Young People and Families Online Resource \(berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk\)](https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/health-visiting) aimed at parents or carers of children aged 0-5 years, or
- [School Nursing | Children Young People and Families Online Resource \(berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk\)](https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/school-nursing) aimed at school-aged children and young people

Help with Health Costs



If you claim certain benefits, are pregnant or recently had a baby, you may be eligible for help to pay for:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment
- sight tests, glasses and contact lenses
- travel to receive NHS treatment
- NHS wigs and fabric supports

Discover more and find out whether you can receive help by using the [NHS online checker](#).

Berkshire West Breathing Space

[Together](#), the national mental wellbeing charity hosts [Berkshire West's Breathing Space](#) in Reading town centre every evening including bank holidays, from 5.00 pm - 11.00 pm.

The Berkshire West Breathing Space service is a safe, welcoming and supportive space for anybody over 18 experiencing emotional distress and struggling to cope. Whatever the reason that you're feeling distressed or in crisis – they are there to help you.

To contact Berkshire West Breathing Space for support please email breathing-space@together-uk.org or call them on freephone 0800 002 9091.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Looking for Volunteers



Healthwatch Wokingham Borough continues to champion the voices of residents who use health and social care under a new provider, The Advocacy People. Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Senior Engagement Lead, and Gráinne Colgan, Digital and Engagement Officer, currently make up the new team. You can read more on [Healthwatch Wokingham Borough's website](#).

The team is looking for voluntary Advisory Group members to join their Advisory Board. This is a varied role which includes overseeing and contributing to Healthwatch Wokingham Borough's work programme. As well as being extremely rewarding and impactful, being part of an Advisory Group is also a great personal and professional development opportunity. Previous Advisory Group/Board experience is not necessary.

The team is looking for members who are passionate about their communities and wanting to make a difference to health and social care locally, particularly from people across the borough with lived experiences, or/and people that can represent one of the following special interest groups:

- Children and young people
- Ethnic communities
- Health Services, including GP practices, dentistry, hospitals
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Maternity
- Mental health
- Older people

If you'd like to organise an introductory meeting with the team or want more information on our voluntary Advisory Group member roles, please email: enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

There's also more information on the [Healthwatch website](#), where you can also ensure you're kept up to date on their news, latest activities, reports and research.