



Here 2 Help this Winter 2022



Helping Hands



Help and support this winter

Winter can often be a difficult time for people. This year, with rising fuel costs, we know it could be even harder, so Solihull Council has worked with local voluntary groups to create this information booklet to help you.

Inside you'll find information to help you keep warm, healthy and safe plus details of financial help and assistance. Wherever possible there are telephone numbers as well as web addresses.

If you need help or can't find the help that you need in this booklet, then please call our local Winter Warmth Helpline, which is run by Age UK Solihull, on 0121 704 8080, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

If you need further assistance you can call the Solihull Connect service at Solihull Council and one of our advisers will assist – 0121 704 8001.

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Keep Warm

Winter can make existing health conditions worse and can also make us more vulnerable to respiratory and other serious illnesses.

People over 65 or with underlying health conditions are particularly at risk.

Sitting in a cold home for a long time can put pressure on your heart and circulation - the ideal temperature in your home is 18C - 21C (64 - 70 degrees Fahrenheit).

It's important to stay protected against a drop in temperature as cold weather can affect your body's ability to fight off viruses and infections. By keeping warm, you can help yourself stay well this winter.

What can you do to keep yourself warm?

Keep moving. Try not to sit still for more than an hour at a time. Even a little bit of activity now and then can help you maintain strength and mobility.

Eat and drink well. It can sometimes be difficult to keep up the motivation to prepare meals, but it's good to try and keep to a routine where you can. Eating hot meals and drinking hot drinks regularly will help keep you warm.

Wrap up well. Wearing plenty of layers is the best way to keep warm in winter. If you're heading out, make sure you take some extra layers, even if you don't need them immediately - the temperature can drop significantly when the sun goes in.

Wear thick socks or slippers. Keeping your feet warm during the day and through the night will make your whole body feel warmer. For an extra cosy feel, slip on a pair of ultra-warm wool or thermal socks.

Use electric blankets, heat pads, footwarmers but be careful. Only, use your electric blanket as instructed and get it tested every three years. Never, use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket.

Winter Warmth Campaign

Supported by Solihull Council, Age UK Solihull provides a local Winter Warmth Helpline and emergency help. It is mainly aimed at older people, those living with disabilities or long-term health condition, carers and families with young children.

Support includes:

- Information and advice
- Emergency heaters if your heating breaks down or isn't keeping you warm
- Finding a tradesperson for emergency repairs
- Boiler/heating repairs and servicing
- Provision of electric blankets, duvets and blankets to vulnerable residents.

For advice and support please ring the Winter Warmth Helpline on 0121 704 8080, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

What can you do to keep your home warm?

It's important to regularly put your heating on to stop

your pipes from freezing and because it can be more expensive to keep starting up and stopping your heating. Here are some tips from Act On Energy which can help to make your home as warm as possible, whilst reducing your energy use and saving money:

1. Turn your thermostat down by 1 degree. Most people won't notice the difference – and an extra layer can always help. The ideal room temperature is 18-21 degrees but do consider if this is warm enough for anyone who has a vulnerability. Do it now before you need to switch the heating on. This could save you up to 10% a year on your bill.

2. And while we're on heating....set your timer to come on 15-30 minutes before you need it and switch off 30 minutes before you leave or go to bed.

3. Switch to low energy lightbulbs. LEDs use about 90% less energy than standard bulbs. They are more expensive to buy – but last up to 12 times longer. Turning off lights in rooms when you don't need them could save about £25 a year.

4. Wash your clothes on the lowest heat setting. 90% of a washing machine's energy is used to heat up the water. Reducing your number of washes by one cycle a week will save about £34 a year. Tumble dryers use a lot of energy so whenever possible dry your clothes outside on a line.

5. Switch appliances off 'stand-by' – this could typically save about £65 a year.

6. **Insulate a hot water tank** – it will pay for itself within 6 months.

7. **Reduce your shower time** – it's easy to lose track of time so try setting an alarm for 3-4 minutes. You could save about £95 a year.

8. **Thick curtains help to keep the heat in.** Keep them tucked behind radiators and pull them at dusk to avoid heat escaping through glass.

9. **Draught proof your home** – check doors, letterboxes, windows, loft hatches and floorboards. Move furniture away from radiators to let warm air circulate.

10. **Be savvy in the kitchen** – only boil the amount of water you need when you need it. When filling the kettle like this you could save £13 a year. Keep a lid on it – trap the heat in your saucepan. Use the dishwasher only when it's full – and reducing use by one cycle a week could save £17 a year. Turn the oven off a few minutes earlier and use residual heat to finish cooking. Using a microwave is also cheaper than using the oven. Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly for maximum efficiency (and while we've got you...keeping a fridge or freezer door open for just a minute means it'll take three minutes to cool down again).

Advice and help with your fuel bills

We know that the rise in energy costs has left many people worried, but there is help available.

Contact your supplier if you're struggling to pay your

bill or you are in debt. The earlier you contact them, the better. They can help with debt payment plans and help you with managing your ongoing payments. Some also have hardship funds to help people.

Price Cap explained. From 1 October, the Energy Price Guarantee is helping householders with their rising energy costs. It means that a 'typical' bill will be around £2,500 a year. But this is not a maximum bill. The £2,500 is based on a typical household usage - so the more energy you use... the more you pay. That's because the Guarantee limits the amount you can be charged per unit of gas or electricity, it does not put a maximum limit on your bill. So, your exact bill amount will continue to be influenced by HOW MUCH ENERGY YOU USE.

Energy Bills Support Scheme. The £400 reduction on domestic electricity bills will be paid monthly in six instalments by your electricity supplier. It does NOT need to be paid back. Your supplier will be able to let you know how they are paying the instalments; it may be a reduction in your Direct Debit or a credit to your account - or discount vouchers issued via text, email or post for those with pre-payment meters to be redeemed in the usual way. Be very careful to avoid scams as no household will be asked for bank details at any point.

Act On Energy is working with Solihull Council to provide help to households with:

- Fuel bills, prepayment meters and debt.
- Fuel supplies including boiler repairs and replacements, fuel meter top-ups, oil supplies.

- Home improvements such as insulation, windows and doors for home-owners up to a value of £10,000, as well as support for private rented sector tenants via a grant to landlords.

For advice and support please ring the free Act On Energy advice line via 0800 988 2881, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, or email advice@actonenergy.org.uk.

Warm places to go and things to do

There are a wide range of places within the local community where you can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment and enjoy refreshments, social activity, information and advice and the company of other people.

These are at a variety of places and activities across the borough, including local libraries, village centres and places of worship.

To find a location near to you visit <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/here2help/community-support> or call Solihull Connect service at Solihull Council and one of our advisers will assist – 0121 704 8001.

Power Cuts

The Priority Services Register is operated by energy suppliers providing support to help people in vulnerable situations. They can notify you of planned power cuts e.g. for engineering work, and prioritise support in an emergency, amongst other things. If you are eligible for this scheme (e.g. over the state pension age, long term medical condition or disability) contact your own energy

supplier to be added to their list.

For more information and a full list of the eligibility criteria visit www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register

During a power cut you can call 105 for help and advice or visit the 105 web page www.powercut105.com/experience. A map of areas affected by power cuts can be found at <https://powercuts.nationalgrid.co.uk/tweets>

Stay Well

The NHS – and other services – are here to help you with physical and mental health.

If you are feeling unwell but don't need urgent/emergency care there are several options available to you:

Pharmacies can advise and treat minor illnesses.

- GP practices across Solihull are open and continue to offer both face to face and remote consultations. GPs have been working hard together to anticipate and support the additional demands of illnesses this winter.
- You can call NHS 111 or visit www.111.nhs.uk at any time. If you need to go to A&E, NHS 111 will book an arrival time. This might mean you spend less time in A&E.

Call 999 only in a medical emergency. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

Infectious diseases

As we learn to live safely with Covid-19, there are simple things we can all do to help reduce the risk of catching Covid-19 and other respiratory infections, such as flu and colds. Things you can choose to do are:

- Get vaccinated.
- Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
- Practise good hygiene: wash your hands, cover your coughs and sneezes, clean your surroundings frequently.
- Wear a face covering or a face mask.

We urge all those eligible to get their Covid-19 booster vaccines and flu jabs as soon as you can, so you have the strongest possible protection over the winter months.

Flu jabs

Flu vaccination is an important priority this coming winter to reduce serious illness and death associated with influenza, and to reduce hospitalisations.

You can get a flu jab this year if you are:

- In a clinical risk group (aged 6 months to under 50 years)
- Pregnant
- Aged 50 years and over (including those who will be 50 years old by 31 March 2023)

- In long-stay residential care home
- A carer
- A close contact of an immunocompromised individual
- A frontline health or social care worker

Children in the following groups are also eligible:

- Aged 2 and 3 years on 31 August 2022
- School aged children (all primary school aged children, reception year to year 6, and eligible secondary school aged children)

Ask your pharmacist or GP if you're eligible for a free flu vaccine. It is one of the most important things you can do to prevent yourself from becoming ill this winter.

Covid-19 vaccinations

As we head into winter, we should remember that Covid-19 continues to circulate in Solihull and rates are still high.

For those who have not had all of their vaccinations (first, second or booster dose), it is never too late – to book an appointment at a vaccine centre or find out where your local walk in clinics are visit <https://www.birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk/>

You can get an autumn Covid-19 booster if you are:

- Aged 50 and over
- Pregnant
- At high risk due to a health condition or because of a weakened immune system

- A carer of those at risk
- A front-line health and social care staff.

You will be contacted once you are eligible - this needs to be at least three months after your previous dose. If you have not been contacted following the three month period, you can visit

www.birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk

to book an appointment.

We urge all those eligible to get their Covid-19 booster vaccines as soon as you can, so you have the strongest possible protection over the winter months.

Prescriptions

If it is difficult to get out or you need to self-isolate, ask your pharmacy about signing up for a delivery service. You can also get help with collecting medicines and attending medical appointments through the NHS Volunteer Responders on 0808 196 3646 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week.

Mental health

Making sure we sleep and eat well, keeping active and talking about our feelings can make a huge difference to our mental health. There are also some free services that are here to help when things get tough:

Mental Health Helpline offers mental health support for all Solihull and Birmingham residents. The service is open 24hrs a day 7 days a week, call 0121 262 3555 or 0800 915 9292.

Or to see the range of easily accessible mental health support that is now available visit

<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Here2help/Stay-well>

Every Mind Matters has practical tips for mental health and wellbeing at

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

Samaritans are here to listen when life is tough – day or night, 365 days a year. Call: 116 123 (free) Email:

jo@samaritans.org Website: www.samaritans.org/

PAPYRUS - HOPELINEUK is a confidential support and advice service for children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. Call: 0800 068 41 41 Text: 07860 039967

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Website: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

Stay Safe

If you think that you, or someone else, is being abused, please report it. Abuse is when someone hurts, harms or causes another person distress. It can include theft, bullying, verbal and racist abuse, threats, pressure about money or wills, unwanted sexual advances, physical abuse and neglect. Abuse can be stopped and even prevented, but this can only happen if someone knows about it.

Report a safeguarding concern

If you have a concern that someone is being abused or neglected, please raise it straight away. If someone is in immediate danger or you think a crime is being committed call the police on 999. If you are in an emergency situation and it is not safe to speak, you can use the Silent Solution System by calling 999 from a mobile telephone. You will hear an automated police message and can press 55 on your handset to be transferred to police call management.

Concern about a child or young person

To report a child or young person at risk call: 0121 788 4300 - Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 5.20pm, Friday 8.45am - 4.30pm 0121 605 6060 - evenings, weekends or bank holidays You can also call Childline on 0800 1111 or NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

Safeguarding adults

If you are worried about your own safety or about the safety of a vulnerable adult, please call: 0121 704 8007 - Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, except Wednesday 10am - 5pm 0121 605 6060 - evenings, weekends or bank holidays.

If you are scared at home, call the local helpline on 0808 800 0028 or the national helpline on 0808 200 0247 or visit www.noexcuseforabuse.info

West Midlands Fire Service – Safe and Well Checks

These checks cover various topics relating to fire safety and can be carried out over the phone, virtually or with a visit. To arrange a check or find out more - 0800 389 5525 or <https://www.wmfs.net/our-services/safe-and-well/>

Financial Help

The winter poses a number of challenges for household finances. Severe weather conditions can pose a serious health risk, but many people may struggle to heat their homes and stay healthy because of costly energy bills.

We've compiled a list of some organisations that can offer advice and support.

Claims

Check that you are receiving all the money that you are entitled to. Do you know what you can claim? Call the DWP Help to Claim line on 0800 1448444 to find out or contact the Solihull Community Advice Hubs on 0121 709 7590.

Money and debt advice

Advance Credit Union is a safe way to save and a cost-effective way to borrow. 0121 350 8883 or email info@advancecu.org.uk

British Legion helps people who have served or are serving in the armed forces. 0808 802 8080

Business Debtline gives free debt advice to the self-employed and small businesses. 0800 197 6026 or www.businessdebtline.org

Citizens Advice Solihull provides free and confidential advice. 0808 2787976 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Adviceline Universal Credit – Help to Claim Line 0800 1448 444 <http://www.casb.org.uk/>

Money Advice Service is a debt counselling service. 0800 138 7777 www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Solihull Community Advice Hubs in Chelmsley Wood and central Solihull provide a wide range of information, advice and support. 0121 709 7590 or email admin@solihullcommunityhub.org.uk

Solihull Community Housing provides advice for SCH tenants, leaseholders and home owners. 0121 717 1515 or email moneyadvice@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or visit <https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/tenants/money-advice/>

Solihull Council Business Support 0121 704 6151/0121 704 6167 or 0121 704 6920 or email business@solihull.gov.uk

Stepchange is a debt charity. 0800 138 1111 or www.stepchange.org

Stop Loan Sharks provides 24/7 support. 0300 555 2222 or www.stoploansharks.co.uk

Entitlements and household grants

Act On Energy provides help with fuel bills, meters and oil supplies for households experiencing hardship. Phone 0800 988 2881

Age UK Solihull Winter Warmth and Emergency Funds provides a local Winter Warmth Helpline and emergency help. For advice and support please ring the Winter Warmth Helpline on 0121 704 8080, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday or email admin@solihullcommunityhub.org.uk

Council Tax Reduction - 0121 704 8200 or <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Council-tax-and-benefits/Council-tax-reduction>

Free Schools Meals – call the Family Information Service on 0800 389 8667 or email familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Housing Benefit – 0121 704 8200 or visit www.solihull.gov.uk/housing-benefit

Sick Pay - <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

Solihull Council's Discretionary Crisis Fund provides help with food, fuel and items like white goods and beds for households experiencing financial hardship. Phone 0121 704 8284.

Solihull Council's Discretionary Housing Payments provides help with rent for Solihull residents in receipt of housing benefit/Universal credit housing costs and experiencing financial hardship. Phone 0121 704 6202.

Solihull Community Housing Hardship Fund provides emergency help for tenants with urgent financial needs. 0121 717 1515 or moneyadvice@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Universal Credit Helpline – 0800 144 8444

Help with employment

Citizens Advice Solihull help with volunteering. 0121 779 6707 kturner@casb.org.uk or for employment advice – 0808 2787976.

Colebridge Trust help with employment and skills. 0121 448 0720 or email jobs@colebridge.org

Job Shops 0121 704 8076

Solihull Council can help with employment. People under 30 years old - 07468 354929. People 30 years and over - 07468 354928. Email - Employmentandskillsteam@solihull.gov.uk

Solihull for Success has lots of information for businesses including help to find local jobs and training options. 0121 704 6151 or visit www.solihullforsuccess.com

Homelessness

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness please call the Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515 and select Option 2 or visit <https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/homeless-enquiry/>

Help for Carers

Are you helping to look after someone who couldn't manage without your help because of illness or disability? Carers Trust Solihull (CTS) can help you. Anyone can become a carer at any time in their life and sometimes for more than one person at a time. You could be temporarily or permanently caring for someone because of illness, disability, a mental health problem, an addiction or for an older person who requires support to maintain their independence.

There are many different types of carers, but if someone you know regularly relies on your support - you are most likely a carer.

CTS can help you get the right support, information and guidance when needed, including:

- Applying for financial support such as Carers Allowance and other benefits
- Enabling respite care
- Access to their events and activities
- Looking at other support
- Planning for the future
- Local support groups for carers -
- Providing a Carers Card
- An assessment to look at how caring affects you and your wellbeing.

For information call 0121 788 1143 email centre@solihullcarers.org or visit www.solihullcarers.org



0121 704 7840



0121 788 1143



0121 312 3717



0121 203 3300



0808 278 7976



0121 448 0720



0808 196 3912



Helping Hands



0121 706 4696



0121 709 7590



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