

# KEEPING WELL IN WINTER AND BEYOND

WINTER WELLBEING GUIDE 2024/25



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Are you over State Pension age, or know someone who is?

**Pension Credit** tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs.

If you are over State Pension age, you may be eligible to claim **Pension Credit**, even if you own your home or have savings. People who claim **Pension Credit** may also be able to get:

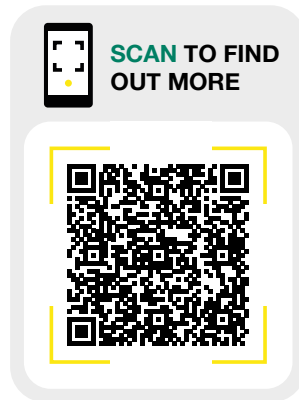
- The **Winter Fuel Payment\*** and other help with heating costs
- Help with rent and Council Tax
- A free TV Licence for those aged 75 or over
- Help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments

You could be eligible for **Pension Credit** if your weekly income is below £218.15 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £332.95. Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

**Don't miss out.**

Check your eligibility at [gov.uk/pension-credit](https://gov.uk/pension-credit) or by calling **0800 99 1234**

Eligibility criteria apply  
\*or the equivalent in Scotland.



## Keeping St Helens well

It is important we look after each other, especially in the winter months. Colds, influenza and other respiratory illnesses are more common in winter months. For some people, the lower levels of light can affect their mental health. Cold weather can worsen some health problems and even lead to serious complications, such as heart attacks, stroke and falls, especially in older people or those with long-term illness. Thus its important we take action to keep well in winter and beyond.

Keeping up to date with all vaccinations, including COVID-19, influenza, pneumonia and RSV vaccines for those who are eligible, remains one of the most effective ways to protect each other in winter. Vaccination helps to prevent serious illness and is therefore effective in reducing hospital admissions and protecting the NHS; information on current vaccination offers is included in this guide.

We are also aware this year there have been changes to winter fuel payments, this in addition to the general price rises we have experienced in recent years may mean that people may struggle to have enough money to heat their homes and eat well. We need to do all we can to keep warm and eat healthy during the winter, so the cost-of-living pressures are particularly pressing in St Helens, where the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (2024) have estimated that one in seven households live in fuel poverty (households unable to heat or cool their homes to a suitable temperature).

Therefore, we want to support people and offer useful advice to keep well and warm this winter. We hope that many people will benefit from the helpful content in this guide on 'Keeping well in winter and beyond' and access the range of help available. We are thankful to all the agencies and partners who have helped us pull together this information.



**Ruth du Plessis**  
Director of Public Health



**Cllr Susan E Murphy MBE**  
Cabinet Member for Public Health



Billinge Rapeseed field

**This Keeping Well in Winter and Beyond - Wellbeing Guide contains information on the local help and support available.**

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## Top 7 tips to keep well during winter

1. **Keep up to date with all your vaccinations** for flu, pneumonia and COVID-19: speak to your GP for more information.
2. **If you feel unwell or have symptoms - such as a high temperature, new cough, diarrhoea or vomiting** avoid close contact with others, especially the vulnerable.
3. **Wash or sanitise your hands regularly** especially after going to the toilet, before eating food, and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
4. **Eat at least one hot healthy meal a day and keep hydrated** by drinking plenty of water (about 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day).
5. **Keep your house warm** (at least 18°C) especially if you are vulnerable to serious illness.
6. **When outside** wear shoes with good grip to avoid trips and falls on icy surfaces.
7. **Look out for others** including vulnerable neighbours, relatives and friends.

## Be prepared for the cold weather

### Why is cold weather an issue?

- Cold weather and reduced sunlight in the winter can make many of us feel less healthy.
- Severe cold snaps have become more frequent and affect everyday life, especially for those people who are already vulnerable because of their age, illness or disability.
- Viruses like flu, norovirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pneumonia and coronavirus spread more between people causing health problems.
- This makes those of us who are more vulnerable to these infections more likely to need treatment putting pressure on the NHS.

### In addition to the information contained in this guide

- If you feel unwell and are more vulnerable, get help as soon as possible from your chemist, GP practice or NHS 111 (go to [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk))
- If you want more information on how to stay well this winter, visit the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/>
- If you want information on local health and care support available to 0-5 year olds, go to <https://www.sthelenscares.co.uk/local-services/catch-app/> for the CATCH App
- If you need information on cost-of-living support and financial assistance available to residents, visit the St Helens Borough Council website: [www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether)

## Staying healthy this winter

We're all more likely to feel the chill in winter, but there are several things that you can do to stay well and protect others too.

In this section, you will find more useful tips and advice to help you stay healthy during the cold season.

## Eat well

- Eat regular healthy meals (hot food and drinks) to keep up your energy levels.
- Plan your meals and eat a variety of different foods from the 5 main food groups to get a wide range of nutrients.
- Aim for a balanced diet with your daily five portions of fruit and vegetables.
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods to avoid the need to go out when it's cold or icy.
- Contact local organisations such as food banks and pantries if you need help getting healthy and affordable food, See the Food Support section on page 22 for further information.

If you want more information on how to eat well visit - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for building immunity against infections, and keeping bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

- Vitamin D is normally made in the skin when you are exposed to sunlight. The sun's UV rays aren't strong enough for most people to make enough vitamin D in the UK during the winter, however.
- It is therefore recommended that everyone take vitamin D supplements during these winter months – 10micrograms per day is enough for most people.
- A very small amount of vitamin D can also be found in certain foods, which can boost your intake. These foods include oily fish (salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel), red meat, liver, egg yolks and fortified foods (some fat spreads and breakfast cereals).
- It is perfectly safe to eat foods that are rich in vitamin D and spend time out in the sun at the same time as taking vitamin D supplements.
- The maximum dose for a vitamin D supplement is 100micrograms (4,000 IU) a day, and you should not take any more than this. This applies to adults, including pregnant and breastfeeding women and the elderly, and children aged 11 to 17 years.
- Children aged 1 to 10 years should not have more than 50 micrograms (2,000 IU) a day. Infants under 12 months should not have more than 25 micrograms (1,000 IU) a day.
- Some people have medical conditions which mean that they may not be able to take vitamin D supplements, or that their GP recommends that they take a different amount. If in doubt, check with your doctor whether this applies to you.

## Stay active

Keeping active benefits both your physical and mental health, and helps you to maintain strength and reduces the risk of falls. For almost everyone exercise is safer than not moving!

- Keep active to help with pain management, keep warm and breathe a little faster.
- If possible, try to move around at least once an hour and remember that simple movement every day helps to increase energy.
- Visit the following websites for examples of ways we can move well at home:
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/strengthexercises>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active>
- <https://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk> - Where you can find out ways to get active whilst living with a health condition, including online workouts.

To find ways to improve your activity levels, visit:

St Helens Wellbeing Service - <https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk>  
or call 01744 371111

Active Lives & Sports Development - <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/sport>  
or call 01744 675403

Go Active St Helens - <https://goactive.sthelens.gov.uk>

Queens Park Health & Fitness - 01744 671717

Newton Health & Fitness - 01744 677970

Over 60's can get a discount on Go Active memberships, visit the website for more details.

## Keep warm

Heat your home to a temperature that's comfortable for you. If you can, this should be at least 18°C in the rooms that you regularly use, such as your living room and bedroom. This is particularly important if you have a health condition. It's best to keep your bedroom windows closed at night as breathing in cold air can increase the risk of chest infections.

Improving the energy efficiency of your home will reduce your heating bills as well as making your home warmer. Have a look at the Affordable Warmth section, pages 11-13, for tips and advice on the support available to make improvements.

If you do need to go out in the cold, it's helpful to wear shoes with a good grip and wear a scarf around your mouth to protect you from cold air to reduce the risk of chest infections.

## Damp and Mould

Excess cold conditions in a property may cause the property to suffer from damp and mould.

Well insulated properties are less likely to suffer from damp and mould issues, more information about preventing damp and mould can be found at the following website <https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/dealing-with-damp-and-condensation-national-energy-action-leaflet/>

All landlords in either the social or private rented sector must investigate and respond to any concerns their tenant may have relating to damp and mould in their homes. If you have concerns about damp and mould in your rented property, please contact your landlord in the first instance to see if improvements need to be made.

More information about housing standards in rented property can be found here <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/article/5200/Introduction>



After speaking with your landlord, if you still have concerns about the housing standards of your rented property, contact St Helens Borough Council's Housing Standards Enforcement Team using the online form available at <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactus> or via the Council's Contact Centre – 01744 676789

## Mental health and wellbeing

Mental resilience is important during the winter as the days get shorter and the nights longer. Fuel poverty can increase social isolation as more vulnerable people like the elderly may avoid going out to avoid coming back to a cold home. Practise the Five ways to wellbeing below to help you improve on your mood:

- **Connect with people.**
- **Be physically active.**
- **Learn new skills.**
- **Take notice - Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness).**
- **Give to others.**

If you need support for your mental health, help is available from the following:

- **Get a GP appointment** (or call NHS 111, if the GP surgery is closed)
- **Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust** have a 24hr mental health crisis line for St Helens, Knowsley, Warrington and Halton: FREEPHONE: 0800 051 1508
- **Call SAMARITANS: 116 123**  
A free-to-call service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if you want to talk to someone in confidence.

## Support with mental health during the cost of living crisis

Our mental health can change depending on our financial situation, below are some resources that can offer support:

- **Mind - Money and Mental Health** - Mind provide practical tips on managing your money and improving your mental health. Visit the Mind website for more information: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/money-and-mental-health/the-link-between-money-and-mental-health/>
- **Mental health and money** - A website created by Mental Health UK, to <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/en/> health and money issues: <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/en/>
- Visit the St Helens Borough Council website for more information on mental health support available: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/mentalhealth>
- Visit the Mind website for more information on the five ways to wellbeing: <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

## Staying hydrated in winter

### How much do I need to drink?

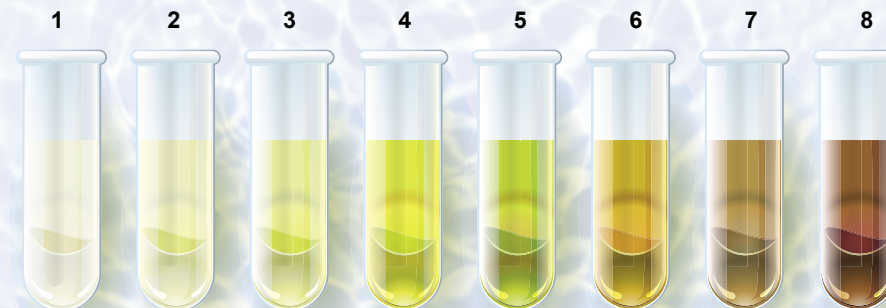
- Keep properly hydrated to maintain good health.
- Drink 1.5 to 2 litres a day which is about 8 hot drinks or glasses of fluid a day.
- Drink regularly - water, tea, coffee, and sugar-free drinks all count.

### Symptoms of dehydration

- Be aware of the two early signs of dehydration: thirst and dark-coloured urine.
- Note other symptoms including dizziness or light-headedness, headache, tiredness, dry mouth, lips and eyes, passing small amounts of urine infrequently (less than three or four times a day)
- If you have these symptoms you should be able to reverse dehydration by drinking more fluids.

### Am I hydrated?

#### Urine colour chart



- Use this urine colour chart to assess whether you are drinking enough fluids throughout the day and to help you stay hydrated.
- If your urine matches the colours numbered 1, 2 or 3 you are hydrated. If your urine matches the colours numbered 4 through 8 you are dehydrated and need to drink more.

Be aware! If you are taking vitamin supplement(s), some of the vitamins can change the colour of your urine for a few hours, making it bright yellow or discoloured.



Sherdley Park

## Vaccination

Vaccines are the best defence we have against COVID-19 and other respiratory infections such as flu. They provide good protection against hospitalisation and death. They also reduce the risk of long-term symptoms.

## Common illnesses in the winter

In the colder months, we are all more likely to catch common illnesses, such as colds, flu, COVID-19, and pneumonia. While these illnesses are unpleasant, most usually healthy people can self-manage them at home. However, there are some steps you can take to reduce your likelihood of becoming unwell this winter and to protect those around you.

## Flu

Flu can be very serious and kills thousands of people in the UK each year. It is a highly infectious disease with symptoms that come on very quickly, including fever, chills, headaches, aches and pains in the joints and muscles and extreme tiredness which often requires bed rest. It spreads from person to person, even amongst those not showing symptoms, and can be much worse for those with underlying health conditions. Fluids and painkillers are the main treatments because antibiotics don't work against viral infections like flu.

Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones and those particularly vulnerable in our community against flu. Remember you need it every year regardless of previous vaccination and it is free for children and adults.

### Children who can have the vaccine

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/>

- All children 2 or 3 years of age on 31st August 2024
- All school aged children (reception to year 11)
- Over 6 months of age to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions
- Children who are home-schooled or not in mainstream education (same ages as those offered in eligible groups at schools)

### Adults who can have the vaccine

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

- 65 years or over
- Have certain health conditions
- Those who are pregnant
- Those who are in long-stay residential care
- Those who receive a carer's allowance, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick
- Those who live with someone who is more likely to get a severe infection due to a weakened immune system, such as someone living with HIV, someone who has had a transplant, or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis

- Vaccination against flu is very important for those with long-term health conditions since they are more vulnerable to flu. This includes people with diabetes, heart problems, chest complaints, a learning disability, neurological diseases, kidney diseases, liver diseases, have suffered a stroke, problems with the spleen, or are significantly overweight (a BMI of 40 and above), those with weakened immune systems due to a condition or treatment such as HIV, steroids or chemotherapy.
- Speak with your GP or pharmacist about the vaccine if you are unsure about your eligibility. Ask your GP about your risk from flu or if any illnesses could be worsened by flu.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands afterwards or use hand sanitiser to reduce the risk of spreading or picking up flu and other common infections.

## COVID-19

COVID-19 is another illness that spreads easily and may cause serious illness in some people.

This is because these viruses change over time, meaning it is important to get vaccinated every year if eligible, even if you were vaccinated the year before. You may be infected with a respiratory virus such as COVID-19 and not have any symptoms but still pass the infection to others. Most people with COVID-19 will feel better within a few weeks.

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections and protect those at highest risk.

- If eligible, get vaccinated, especially if you are in a vulnerable group or care for vulnerable people.
- Practise good hygiene: – wash your hands – catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue – clean your surroundings frequently.
- If you have symptoms (temperature, new cough, unwell), try and stay at home and keep your distance from others, particularly those who are more likely to get seriously ill from viruses. Return to normal activities once feeling better or fever has settled.
- Consider getting yourself tested with a lateral flow test. If you have certain health conditions or work in healthcare you may be able to get free test kits through the NHS.
- Most people are able to look after themselves at home, but if you have any concerns contact your GP or NHS 111 for further advice.
- If you have symptoms and are unable to remain at home, consider wearing a face mask in enclosed spaces, including public transport.
- How to look after yourself at home if you have covid <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/covid-19-symptoms-and-what-to-do/> 14 15

### Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine this winter

- Adults aged 65 years and over
- Residents in care homes for older adults
- People with certain clinical conditions
- Frontline NHS and social care workers, and those who work in care homes for older people



## Pneumonia

Pneumonia refers to serious chest infections that can cause: coughs, shortness of breath, wheezing, fevers, chest pain, body aches, tiredness, appetite loss, and may cause confusion, particularly in older people.

People who are over 65 or the very young, or have heart or lung problems are at more risk of becoming seriously unwell and are more likely to need medical assistance. Most people are able to look after themselves at home, but if you have any concerns contact your GP or NHS 111 for further advice. If you or someone else is struggling to breathe, is suddenly confused, or has pale, blue, or blotchy skin, lips or tongue call 999, or if you cannot wake your baby or they feel floppy.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce your risk of becoming unwell with pneumonia and to protect those around you:

- The pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for babies, people who are at higher risk of becoming unwell with pneumonia, and people aged over 65 and protects against pneumococcal sepsis and meningitis as well as pneumonia.
- Speak to your GP or pharmacist if you are unsure about your eligibility.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you are coughing and sneezing and dispose of tissues as soon as possible.
- Wash your hands regularly to reduce the spread of infections to others.
- Drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol and ibuprofen as needed and according to packet instructions.

## RSV Infection

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) commonly causes coughs and colds, but illness can be more severe in babies and older adults, as well as in those who have long-term health conditions. RSV can cause pneumonia in some cases. Typically symptoms of RSV infection include runny nose; coughs and sneezes; tiredness; and fevers. Like with the other illnesses described here, most people are able to look after themselves at home, but if you have any concerns contact your GP or NHS 111 for further advice. And call 999 if someone is experiencing severe difficulty breathing, if they are becoming pale, blue, or grey in the lips of skin, or if your child is becoming floppy or will not wake up.

There is no specific treatment for RSV infection but there are a number of steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of becoming unwell with the infection and to limit spread of the virus.

- A vaccine against RSV is available for pregnant people (from 28 weeks pregnancy) and for those aged 75-79. And an injection of infection-fighting antibodies is offered to children who are at highest risk of becoming seriously unwell.
- Take paracetamol and ibuprofen as needed against the fever and in line with packet instructions.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

## Norovirus

Norovirus, sometimes known as the 'winter vomiting bug', is the most common stomach bug in the UK, affecting people of all ages. It is highly contagious and is transmitted by contact with contaminated surfaces, an infected person, or consumption of contaminated food or water. The symptoms of norovirus are very distinctive - people often report a sudden onset of nausea followed by vomiting and diarrhoea. An infection with norovirus is self-limiting and most people will make a full recovery in 1-2 days. You can normally look after yourself or your child at home.

- Good hand hygiene is important to stop the spread of the virus just as with flu.
- Wash your hands using soap and water and dry them after using the toilet, before preparing food and eating.
- Don't rely on hand sanitisers only as these do not kill the virus.
- Wash any contaminated clothing or bedding separately using detergent at 60°C.
- Keep hydrated, especially children and the elderly. Refer to the "Staying hydrated in winter" page for symptoms of dehydration.
- Stay off work or school until at least 48 hours after the norovirus symptoms have stopped.
- Do not visit A&E or GPs with symptoms as this may spread the virus, unless advised by a healthcare professional. Call ahead to your GP or NHS 111 if you are concerned.



Powerboats, Carr Mill Dam

## Cost of living support

If you are struggling to pay bills, or are concerned about food and energy costs, a range of support may be available.

Please see the information below about schemes you may be able to access. There is also advice on ways to reduce your energy bills and access food support.

More information is available on the website - <https://costoflivingsupport.campaign.gov.uk/> for information on 'Help for Households'

## Support with energy efficiency improvements

Energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation can make a big difference to bills, as can replacing an old inefficient boiler. You may be eligible for free energy efficiency or heating measures - contact the following organisations to see what support is available:

- Save Energy Advice Line – 0800 043 0151
- St Helens Borough Council's Affordable Warmth Team – 01744 676555
- Your energy supplier and see if you qualify for the Energy Company Obligation
- To see what measures are recommended for your property, create an action plan and see what support may be available visit <https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>

## Help with household costs

There are a number of schemes that may be able to help, visit <https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living> to find out what support is available to help with the cost of living. This includes income and disability benefits, bills and allowances, childcare, housing and travel.

- **Household Support Fund** - This Government funding has been distributed to English councils, who can offer direct support for those most in need in their region. Funding is aimed at the most vulnerable and those who cannot pay for things like energy and water bills, food and essential items. You do not have to be getting benefits to get help from your local council, and if you do get benefits, they will not be affected. Local authorities can also issue food vouchers to families during the school holidays. For details of eligibility and how to apply for St Helens Borough Council visit - <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/article/6467/Household-Support-Fund-scheme>

## Cheaper phone and broadband

Want to pay less for reliable broadband? If you are in receipt of government benefits, you could be saving money right now on your monthly broadband and mobile bills by accessing cheaper deals called social tariffs. For more information visit - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs>

## Maximise your income

Sometimes people are missing out on benefits because they think they aren't eligible, but some benefits are available which are not related to your income or savings, we would encourage you to check and make sure. This could increase your income and make you eligible for other types of assistance. You can check your entitlement on the Government's benefits calculator: <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators> OR complete a quick benefits check using: [www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk) or [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

If you would like extra support with checking your entitlement or making a claim, contact:

- Citizens Advice St Helens – call 01744 737866
- Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline – call 0808 223 1133 (Textphone users call 18001 0808 223 1133) (call charges may apply)
- St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency – call 01744 676555
- National Energy Action Warm and Safe Homes Advice Service – call 0800 304 7159

## Help paying your water bill

Water companies understand that people can struggle to pay their bills and fall into debt at times. If this happens to you, contact your water company and explain your situation so that they can provide you with the best support they can offer. Support can include reduced bills through social tariffs, debt support schemes and hardship funds. For more information visit - <https://www.unitedutilities.com/my-account/your-bill/difficulty-paying-your-bill/how-we-can-help/>

## Affordable warmth

### Get help to pay your fuel bills

There are a number of schemes available that may reduce the amount you spend on energy.

- **Warm Home Discount Scheme** - Is a one-off £150 discount off your electricity bill. If you're eligible, your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill.

#### Core groups:

- Core Group 1: Individuals of pensionable age and in receipt of pension credit
- Core Group 2: Individuals dependent on means-tested benefits and with high energy costs

You'll get a letter between October 2024 and early January 2025 if: you're eligible for the scheme or you might be eligible for the scheme, but you need to give more information.

If you're eligible for the scheme, your letter will confirm you do not need to do anything. You'll receive the discount automatically.

If you need to give more information, your letter will tell you to call the helpline by 28 February 2025 to confirm your details. If you're eligible, your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March 2025.

If you do not get a letter Contact the Warm Home Discount Scheme if you do not get the letter by early January 2025 and you think you're eligible.

You must contact them before 28 February 2025.

Warm Home Discount Scheme helpline - Telephone: 0800 030 9322

For more up to date details please visit the Government's Warm Home Discount webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

- **Winter Fuel Payment** - If you were born before 23 September 1958 you could get either £200 or £300 to help you pay your heating bills for winter 2024 to 2025. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

You may be eligible if you or your partner get certain benefits. For further details visit <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

If you're eligible, you'll get a letter in October or November saying how much you'll get. Most eligible people are paid in November or December. If you do not get a letter or the money has not been paid into your account by 29 January 2025 call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre.

If you do not get a letter but you think you're eligible, check if you need to make a claim.

You can also call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre if you're not sure if you're eligible. Please note you cannot make a claim by phone.

Winter Fuel Payment Centre - Telephone: 0800 731 0160

- **Cold Weather Payment** - Some households could be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment of £25 per qualifying week. This is paid automatically to those on certain benefits when the average temperature in their area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days. To find out more about Cold Weather Payments, visit [www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment](http://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment)

## Quick tips to save energy

Saving energy at home won't just help reduce your energy bills, it's also good for the environment by reducing your carbon emissions to help combat climate change. The following websites offer a range of no cost and low cost advice on the best ways to reduce costs and keep your home feeling warmer:

- <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice/>

- <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/>

#### Some of the suggested tips include:

- Switch off electrical appliances at the plug.
- Draught-proof your home as a cheap option for keeping your home warmer using products available at your local DIY store, but make sure there is adequate ventilation.
- Turn off lights when you're not using them or when you leave a room.
- Close curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.
- Reduce your boiler flow temperature - depending on the type of boiler you have, its efficiency can be improved by adjusting the 'flow temperature' to a lower temperature of 60 degrees, this could save you approximately £65 per year. For more information visit: <https://moneysavingboilerchallenge.com>
- Turn down radiators when rooms aren't in use - most radiators are fitted with valves that control the temperature of a room. Aim for the lowest setting that keeps the room to your desired temperature
- Use your washing machine on a 30-degree cycle and try to use it once a week.
- Avoid using a tumble dryer, use clothes maidens and dry outside if possible.

- Swap your bath for a shower and try to keep your shower time to 4 minutes.
- Avoid overfilling the kettle and consider fitting an aerator onto your kitchen tap.

**Remember:** take regular meter readings and submit them to your energy supplier to help keep your bills accurate.

**If you are struggling to pay your energy bills, contact your energy supplier to check that you are on the cheapest tariff or discuss energy debt. Your energy supplier is required to work with you to set up an affordable repayment plan and the sooner you contact them to let them know you're struggling, the quicker you can get help.**

## Switch Energy Supplier or Tariff

By switching, energy customers can move to a new tariff offering better value for money, or to a new supplier for better customer service.

Most energy customers are currently on a standard variable tariff and pay at a level set by the energy price cap for each kilowatt hour (kWh) they use.

The best energy deal for you will depend on your usage and circumstances, so if you're thinking about switching it's important to make sure you get a deal that's right for you.

You can assess the different deals from suppliers using an Ofgem-accredited price comparison website.

For further information on how to compare and switch energy tariff or supplier when shopping around for a new energy deal visit - <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/switching-energy-supplier>

## Power cuts and the Priority Services Register (PSR)

If you have a power cut, call the **national power cut phone line on 105 for free.**

It's really important that both your supplier and Distribution Network Operator (DNO) know if you are in a vulnerable situation so they can include you on their priority services register. This register includes people who are of pensionable age, have children under 5, a disability or long-term medical condition.

Being on the register means that you will be prioritised in the event of a power cut and you will receive additional non-financial services such as password security or information in different formats. For more information about Support and guidance with your energy bills and supplier, including the priority services register please visit the following website <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households>

United Utilities, your water supplier, also has a priority services register. Details can be found here - <https://www.unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/priority-services/>



Bold Forest Park

## Stay warm safely

- Carbon monoxide is a deadly gas that cannot be seen, smelt or tasted. The common signs of carbon monoxide are gas flames burning orange or yellow instead of the normal blue, soot stains on or above the appliance and/or coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out. Carbon monoxide can be produced by faulty fuel burning appliances.
- Make sure that appliances such as fires, boilers and gas cookers are regularly serviced by a qualified engineer. For gas appliances, engineers must be Gas Safe registered and show proof of this. You can also install a carbon monoxide alarm. These can be bought from DIY stores and supermarkets; they cost around £15 and could save lives.
- If you rent your home, by law landlords must carry out an annual safety check and provide you with a Gas Safety Certificate. If you are a homeowner and on certain benefits you may be eligible for a free annual gas safety check. Contact your gas supplier to check your eligibility. If you smell gas call the 24-hour Gas Emergency Hotline on 0800 111 999.

For further information on carbon monoxide safety, go to: <https://www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/carbon-monoxide>

## Welcome Spaces in St Helens Borough

Welcome spaces are somewhere you can go to get warm, stay warm, access support and enjoy a little company. In some you'll also be able to get refreshments and food. With many people feeling the pressure because of increased energy costs and the rising cost of living, our Welcome Spaces Network aims to support residents by providing a free warm space, where you can stay for as long, or for as short a period as you wish (within their opening hours).

As part of the St Helens Together Welcome Spaces initiative, there are 12 libraries and other locations across our borough that are providing a range of support and a welcome space for residents.

To find a welcome space near you visit: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/welcomespaces>

## Food support

Many residents in St Helens Borough are concerned about the cost of living crisis facing them and worry about getting food for themselves or their families.

Halton & St Helens Voluntary and Community Action have produced a guide to community food provision, which includes details of food banks, pantries and 'pay it forward' schemes in the borough, plus other support and information.

[https://www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Community%20Food%20Provision%20in%20St%20Helens%20JULY%202024%20Edition\\_0.pdf](https://www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Community%20Food%20Provision%20in%20St%20Helens%20JULY%202024%20Edition_0.pdf)

Please note that the food support services can change opening times and prices periodically. Please visit the Live Well Directory for the most up to date information <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/foodsupport>

## Food banks

Food banks provide emergency food and compassionate, dignified support to people locked in crisis. There are 6 food banks available to residents in St Helens Borough, five of which are managed by The Hope Centre charity in St Helens and require a voucher from a relevant local agency.

### Food banks requiring a voucher

Name	Phone number	Address	Opening times
The Mount	01744 611771	Parr Mount Traverse Street Fingerpost St Helens WA9 1BW	Monday 12.30 – 14.30
The Hope Centre, Christian Life Centre	01744 26414	Atherton Street St Helens WA10 2DT	Tuesday 11.00 -14.30  Friday 11.00 – 14.30
St John The Baptist Church	07519 357098	St John Street Earlestown WA12 9DG	Wednesday 11.30 – 13.30
St Helens Parish Church Hall	07599 582848	Church Street St Helens WA10 1AF	Thursday 11.00 – 14.00
Newton Community Centre	01925 224731	Park Road South Newton-le-Willows WA12 8EX	Friday 11.00 – 14.30

### Independent food banks – no voucher required

Name	Phone number	Address	Opening times
Sexton Avenue Community Allotments	01744 607907	off Inman Avenue Parr St Helens WA9 2QS	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday (most weeks) - 11:00 - 13:00 Wednesdays - At Derbyshire Hill Family & Community Centre only. - 11:00 - 13:00  For up to date details visit - <a href="https://www.thelivewelldirectory.com/Services/9260">https://www.thelivewelldirectory.com/Services/9260</a>



Christ Church Eccleston

## Community food pantries

Pantries operate as a member-led neighbourhood hub and are just like a shop, in that you choose the food you want from the shelves. Members pay a small subscription of £5 each week they visit, and in return can choose groceries worth many times more, often saving up to £1,000 a year on shopping bills.

14 community pantries in: Town Centre; Thatto Heath; West Park; Eccleston; Newton le Willows; Sutton; Moss Bank; Haydock; and Billinge

Name	Address	Phone number and email	Opening times
Hope Pantry	Wesley Methodist Church Corporation Street, Town Centre, St Helens WA10 1LF	Telephone: 01744 26414 Email: sally@hopecentre.org.uk	Tuesday 11.00 – 13.00 Thursday 16.00 - 18.00
St Matthew's Centre Pantry	St Matthews Grove Thatto Heath St Helens WA10 3SE	stmatthewscentrepantry@hotmail.com	Monday 18:30 – 20:00 Wednesday 10.30 - 12.30
St Mark's T.A.N.G.O Pantry	Park Street Haydock St Helens WA11 0BH	01744 602641 foodpantry@stmarkshaydock.org	Monday 17:30 - 19:00 Thursday 9:00 - 11:00
St Luke's Pantry	Knowsley Road St Helens WA10 4PU	07762 992988 stlukespantry@gmail.com	Wednesday 15:00 - 17:00
Sutton Food Pantry	St Michael & All Angels Church, Gartons Lane, St Helens, WA9 4RB	07765 736199	Sunday 13.30 – 16.00
Cornerstone Pantry	The Lester Drive Centre, 5 Lester Drive, St Helens, WA10 5BF	foodpantry@cornerstonecommunitychurch.co.uk	Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00
St Aiden's Food Pantry	St Aiden's Church Main Road Billinge, WN5 7LA	info@staidanbillinge.org.uk	Friday 11.00 – 13.30

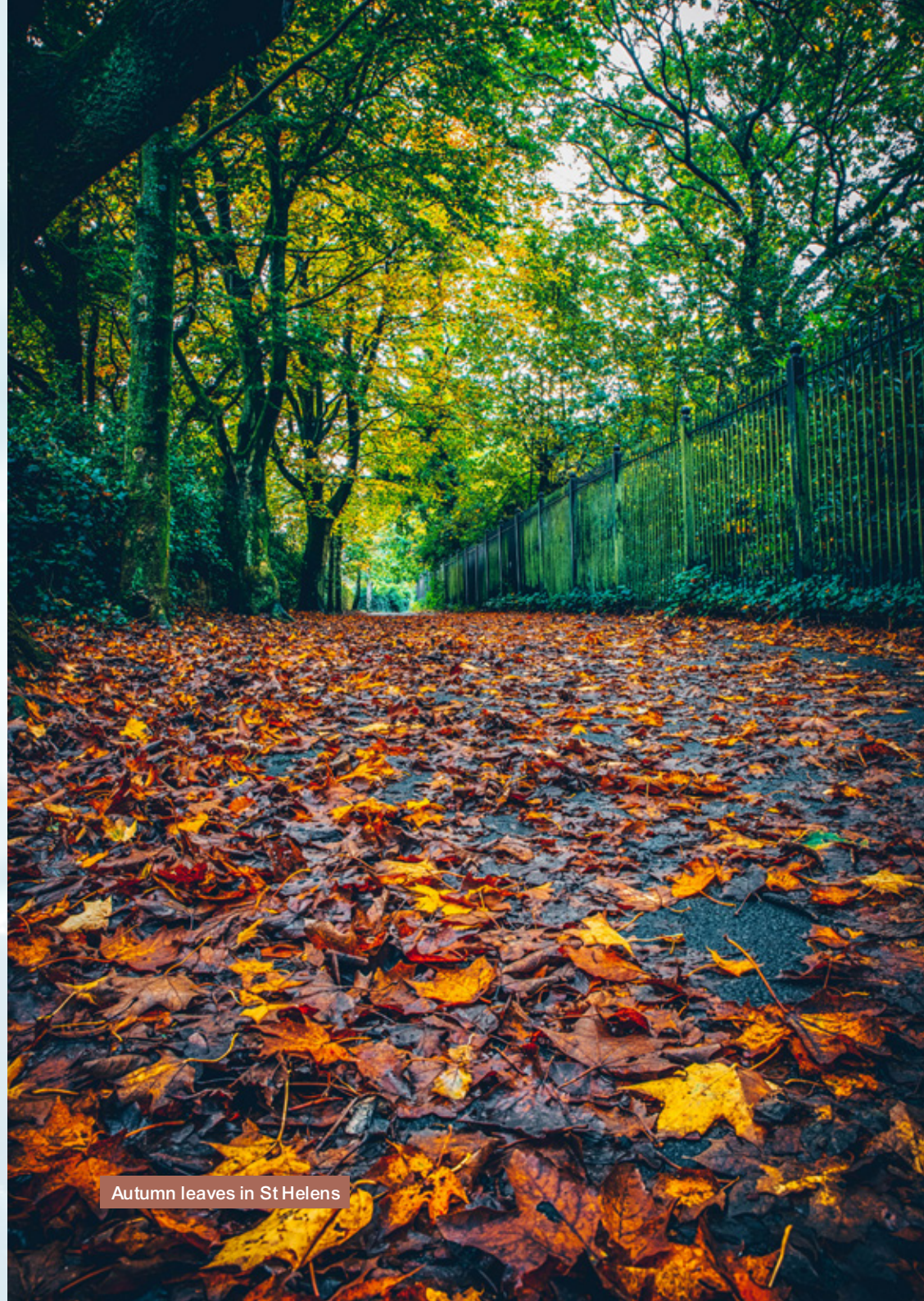
There is also now 1 surplus food share

**OPEN TO ALL** - no means testing. Calling all FOODSAVERS! to join is £5 per year and then it is £1 per bag, per session!

Name	Address	Phone number and email	Opening times
Domestic Abuse WA12 Surplus Foodshare	1a Haydock St Newton le willows WA12 9AB	domesticabusewa12@gmail.com	Monday - Saturday 10.30am - 12.30pm & 8.30pm - 9.30pm Sunday 5.00pm - 6.00pm

3 Pay it forward Cafés - A “pay it forward” café is a place where people can pay for an extra drink or meal so someone in need can claim it for free.

Name	Address	Phone number and email	Opening times	
Plan Bee Community Coffee Shop	13-15 North Road, Town Centre St Helens WA9 2TW	01744 612989	Monday – Friday 09.00 – 15.00	Plan Bee are offering a hot meal and a drink to anyone in financial hardship - just make sure you let them know you need to access their Pay it Forward Scheme.
WA12 Community Café	Cross Lane United Church Cross Lane, Earlestown, Newton le Willows WA12 9PT	domestic abusewa12@gmail.com	Monday – Tuesday 08.00 – 15.00	WA12 operate a Pay It Forward Board so anyone who needs support can just take an ‘offer’ from the board and redeem it. They also operate a KIDS EAT FREE with a paying adult during the school holidays.
Newton Community Centre - Community Café	Newton-Le-Willows Family And Community Association Park Road South Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 8EX	Telephone: 01925 224731 Email: contact@newtoncommunitycentre.co.uk		Serving hot drinks and light snacks: Mondays - Wednesdays 9.00am – 4.30pm Thursdays 9.00am – 3.30pm Fridays 9.00am – 2.30pm



Autumn leaves in St Helens

## How food pantries work

**Step one:** Find your nearest pantry (you must live in the area in which it is based).

**Step two:** Go along and join on the day it is open, remembering it is open to everyone in that community.

**Step three:** Pay your £5 for Mobile Pantry, Cornerstone, or Parr (otherwise £4) each time you visit. Sit and have a cuppa while you wait for your turn.

**Step four:** Choose your shopping, which will always be worth more than your weekly membership fee.

**Step five:** Tell your neighbours and get them to join too.

If you have a smart phone, apps like OLIO and TooGoodToGo will let you know if there is food being sold at low cost near to you.

### How it works at St Aiden's Food Pantry

**Step one:** Go along and join on the day it is open, remembering it is open to everyone in that community.

**Step two:** Pay an initial ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP of £5 then it is £3 each week you visit.

**Step three:** Choose your 15 items of shopping which will always be worth more than your weekly membership fee.

**Step four:** Tell your neighbours and get them joining also.

## Mobile Food Pantry

In addition to the six static community pantry sites outlined above, support is also available from the mobile pantry which currently rotates around four local sites every week. Please refer to <https://sthelensmobilepantry.org.uk/> for the most up-to-date timetable and registration to the mobile pantry programme.

Name	Address	Opening times
Sutton Family Hub pantry	Ellamsbridge Road, St Helens, WA9 3PX <a href="mailto:info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk">info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk</a>	Tuesday 10:30 – 12:00
Park Farm Community Centre	54 Kentmere Avenue, Carr Mill, St Helens, WA11 7PG <a href="mailto:info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk">info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk</a>	Thursday 10:30 – 12:00
Peasley Cross URC	Beaufort Street, St Helens, WA9 3BQ <a href="mailto:info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk">info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk</a>	Friday 08:45 – 10:15
Cross Lane United Church pantry	Cross Lane, Earlestown, Newton-le-Willows WA12 9PT <a href="mailto:info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk">info@sthelensmobilypantry.org.uk</a>	Monday 10.30 – 12.00



Rainhill



St Peters Church, Newton Le Willows





## Free school meals

Your child will be eligible for free school meals if you (or your partner) are in receipt of any of the following:

**Universal Credit** and net earnings are no more than £7,500 per year (£616.67 in your last assessment period, £1,233.34 over last two assessment periods or £1,850 over last three assessment periods)

- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance**
- **Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999**
- **The guaranteed element of Pension Credit**
- **Child Tax Credit** (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income, as assessed by HMRC, of no more than £16,190)
- **Working Tax Credit 'run on'** - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also receive free school meals.

Once eligible, your child will continue to receive free school meals in primary or secondary school until they have finished their current phase of education i.e. primary (Year 6) or secondary (Year 11).

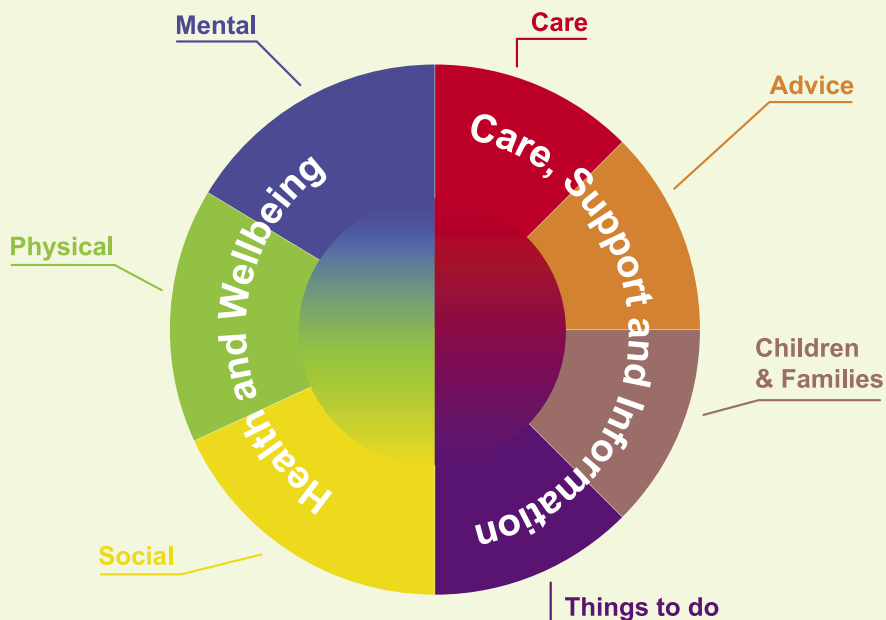
From 1 April 2025, if your child moves between primary and secondary school you will need to reapply for free school meals.

For more information or to apply please visit <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals> or call St Helens Borough Council Revenues & Benefits Team on 01744 676789 or email [educationbenefits@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:educationbenefits@sthelens.gov.uk)



# THE LIVE WELL DIRECTORY

Find what you need to live well



The Live Well Directory is a free website listing wellbeing and support services in St Helens Borough. It offers detailed information on local health and wellbeing support, community events, and activities, all in one regularly updated online space. The 'What's On' calendar features free and affordable events, and connects you with local organisations dedicated to providing support and a warm welcome. With a unique button to help reduce social isolation and loneliness, the directory also makes it easier than ever to find local help, join community groups, and build connections nearby.


To get your page created visit

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/LIVEWELLSTHELENS/>



[www.thelivewelldirectory.com](http://www.thelivewelldirectory.com)

## Useful & emergency contact numbers

<b>Save Energy Advice Line (SEAL)</b> <i>Offers free and impartial energy efficiency advice to residents of Merseyside and Cheshire East on how to keep from being cold each winter and necessary information to keep people out of fuel poverty.</i>	<b>0800 043 0151</b>  <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.epplus.org.uk/projects/save-energy-advice-line/">https://www.epplus.org.uk/projects/save-energy-advice-line/</a>
<b>National Gas Emergency Number</b> <i>If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety.</i>	<b>0800 111 999</b> (24-hour helpline)  <b>If you are deaf or hard of hearing use textphone service on 18001 then 0800 371 787.</b>
<b>SP Energy Networks</b> <i>Offers help and advice on any energy related queries.</i>	<b>0800 001 5400</b>  <b>OR</b> <b>0330 1010 400</b> (from a mobile phone)  <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/advice.aspx">https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/advice.aspx</a>
<b>Electricity North West Ltd</b> <i>In the event of a power cut, please contact your local network operator.</i>	<b>0800 195 4141</b>  <b>Call the national power cut line on 105</b> 
<b>United Utilities</b> <i>If you have no water, a leak, a burst pipe, or low pressure</i>	<b>0345 6723 723</b>
<b>Merseyside Police</b>	<b>101</b> (non-emergency number)
<b>NHS</b>	<b>111</b> (non-emergency medical help)
<b>Police, Fire and Ambulance emergencies</b>	<b>999</b>
<b>St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency</b> <i>Provides guidance and assistance to carry out repairs, improvements or adaptations to help you continue living independently in your home in comfort and safety.</i>	<b>01744 676555</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:homeimprovementagency@sthelens.gov.uk">homeimprovementagency@sthelens.gov.uk</a>  <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://hia.sthelens.gov.uk/">https://hia.sthelens.gov.uk/</a>
<b>St Helens Borough Council Contact Centre</b> <i>Access to the Customer Services Team at St Helens Borough Council</i>	<b>01744 676789</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk">contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk</a>

<p><b>St Helens Wellbeing Service</b> Offers access to a wide range of healthy living and wellbeing support through a 'one stop shop'.</p>	<p><b>01744 371111</b> <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:chcp.sthelens@nhs.net">chcp.sthelens@nhs.net</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/">https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>St Helens Contact Cares</b> Provides access via a single point of contact telephone number to a wide range of services and offers advice and support from health and care professionals, all located in one place.</p>	<p><b>01744 676767</b> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.sthelensccg.nhs.uk/local-services/contact-cares/">https://www.sthelensccg.nhs.uk/local-services/contact-cares/</a></p>
<p><b>Debt or money worries help</b> If you are struggling with debt, you can get help and advice that you can trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stepchange Debt Charity - 0800 138 1111 <a href="http://www.stepchange.org.uk">www.stepchange.org.uk</a></b></li> <li>• <b>PayPlan - 0800 280 2816 <a href="http://www.payplan.com">www.payplan.com</a></b></li> <li>• <b>National Debtline - 0808 808 4000 <a href="http://www.nationaldebtline.org">www.nationaldebtline.org</a></b></li> <li>• <b>Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline - 0808 223 1133. Textphone users call 18001 0808 223 1133 (call charges may apply) or visit your local Citizens Advice to see if you can access hardship funds to help with repaying your debt</b></li> <li>• <b>Money Helper website - <a href="http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk">www.moneyhelper.org.uk</a> Offers a list of free debt advice services that could help.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>St Helens food support</b> If you need advice and help to get healthy and affordable food locally.</p>	<p><b>For a list of local food banks and pantries and their contact details:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See pages 15 to 18 of this calendar under the 'Food support' section</li> <li>• Halton &amp; St Helens Voluntary and Community Action guide to community food provision - <a href="https://www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk/updates/food">https://www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk/updates/food</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>St Helens Carers Centre</b> Family Carers can receive free support, advice and services including welfare benefits advice from St Helens Carers Centre.</p>	<p><b>Call: 01744 675 615</b> <b>Website - <a href="http://www.sthelenscarers.info">www.sthelenscarers.info</a></b></p>

<p><b>Welcome spaces</b> Offer a place you can go to get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company and in some places, you can get refreshments</p>	<p><b>For a list of welcome spaces and their contact details, please visit:</b> <a href="https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/welcome-spaces">https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/welcome-spaces</a></p>
<p><b>Citizens Advice St Helens</b> Provide free, independent and confidential advice that helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems and also influence policymakers.</p>	<p><b>Call 01744 737866</b> <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://sthelenscab.org.uk/">http://sthelenscab.org.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>Mental health and wellbeing support</b> Provide advice and support to help you if you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mersey Care 24hr Mental Health Crisis Line: Call 0800 051 1508</b> If you need urgent mental health support, please call this 24/7 freephone crisis line. For all ages – children, young people and adults</li> <li>• <b>Samaritans: Call 116 123</b> Provide a free-to-call service which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if you want to talk to someone in confidence.</li> <li>• <b>HOPELINEUK: Call 0800 068 4141</b> Support for children and young people under the age of 35 experiencing thoughts of suicide or for anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide.</li> <li>• <b>Shout: Text REACH to 85258</b> Free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. They support people who are anxious, stressed, depressed, suicidal or overwhelmed and who need immediate support. Accessible to all ages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Halton &amp; St Helens Voluntary and Community Action</b> Provides advice, information and development support services to voluntary, community and faith organisations and volunteers in the boroughs of St Helens and Halton</p>	<p><b>01744 457100</b> <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@haltonsthelensvca.org.uk">info@haltonsthelensvca.org.uk</a></p>

# The year ahead at a glance

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## JANUARY

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## FEBRUARY

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## JULY

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## SEPTEMBER

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## OCTOBER

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## DECEMBER

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ST HELENS  
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