

A GUIDE TO
KEEPING WELL THIS WINTER

Be
Winter
Prepared

The word 'Be' is in a white script font. 'Winter' is in a large, dark red script font with a white outline. 'Prepared' is in a white script font. The text is surrounded by white line-art illustrations of snowflakes and leaves.

for **with** you
you

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Keeping warm in winter is very important to staying well and to maintaining your strength and mobility.

To help you do that, this booklet contains some useful advice to help you plan ahead, be prepared, and access advice and support.

If you do struggle to stay warm this winter, we very much want you to use the contact details in this booklet to obtain the help you need.

Councillor Trisha Long
Stronger Communities

Councillor Andy Bowden
Adult Social Care & Health

The guide is split into three sections: **Staying warm**, **Staying well** and **Staying safe**.

CONTENTS

TOP 7 TIPS TO KEEP WELL DURING WINTER Page 3

STAYING WARM

Managing your costs Page 4

Keeping yourself warm Page 8

Paying your bills Page 11

STAYING WELL

Mental Health and wellbeing Page 14

Eating well Page 15

Stay hydrated Page 16

Vitamin D matters Page 17

Getting your jabs Page 18

Practice good hygiene Page 18

STAYING SAFE

Carbon monoxide Page 19

Slips and trips Page 19

Scams Page 20








USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS Page 21



SCAN
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www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether

TOP 7 TIPS TO KEEP WELL DURING WINTER

-  Keep up to date with all your vaccinations for flu, pneumonia and COVID-19: speak to your GP for more information.
-  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.
-  Wash or sanitise your hands regularly especially after going to the toilet, before eating food, and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
-  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).
-  Keep your house warm (at least 18°C) especially if you are vulnerable to serious illness.
-  When outside wear shoes with good grip to avoid trips and falls on icy surfaces.
-  Look out for others including vulnerable neighbours, relatives and friends.

MANAGING YOUR COSTS

Keeping yourself and your home warm will be a priority this winter. Here's how to stay in control of your money and get the support you're entitled to.

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 **Better Off Calculator** at www.sthelens.gov.uk/betteroffcalculator or complete a quick benefits check at www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

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

- St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency - **01744 676555**,
- Citizens Advice St Helens - **01744 737866**
or visit www.sthelenscab.org.uk
- Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline - **0808 223 1133**,
- National Energy Action Warm and Safe Homes Advice Service - **0800 304 7159**.

MANAGING YOUR COSTS

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:

- St Helens Borough Council's Affordable Warmth Team – **01744 676555**,
- Save Energy Advice Line – **0800 043 0151**,
- Your energy supplier and see if you qualify for the Energy Company Obligation,
- Other local grant schemes are available, such as the Warm Homes Local Grant. Visit the council's Save Energy webpage at www.sthelens.gov.uk/saveenergy for more details,
- To see what measures are recommended for your property, create an action plan and see what support is available at <https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>

Energy Savings and Tips

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://cleanenergy.campaign.gov.uk/>
- www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/

OUR TOP TIPS TO SAVE ENERGY



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.



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. 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 avoid washing half loads, it takes nearly as much energy as a full load!



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.



KEEPING YOURSELF WARM

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>

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.

Check your boiler

Get your boiler serviced every year. It's best to do this ahead of winter, to make sure it doesn't break down when you need it most. To find a gas engineer, contact the Gas Safe Register (**0800 408 5500**, <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/>). If you rent, check if your landlord has arranged this.

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/>

OUR TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU KEEP WARM



Keep your home at 18°C or more especially your living room and bedroom.



Keep bedroom windows and curtains closed at night to keep the heat in.



Wearing warm clothes, shoes with good grip, and a scarf over your mouth when outside can help protect you from the cold and reduce the chance of chest infections.



For support with keeping warm and reducing heating bills, contact St Helens Borough Council's Affordable Warmth & Welfare team on 01744 676555.



Cold homes are more likely to develop damp and mould which are bad for your health. For advice on dealing with damp and condensation, visit <https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/dealing-with-damp-and-condensation-national-energy-action-leaflet/>



Landlords must act if you report damp or mould. If you still have concerns after speaking to your landlord, contact the council's enforcement team using the online form available at <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactus> or via the Council's Contact Centre – **01744 676789**.



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.

KEEPING YOURSELF WARM

Join the Priority Services Register

Make sure you've signed up to your energy supplier and network operator's Priority Service Register if you:

- are over State Pension age,
- have a disability,
- have a long-term illness, or sight or hearing loss,
- are in a vulnerable situation – for example, if you have a mental health condition, or would struggle to get to the door in an emergency.

This gives you access to free support and services. You will be given advance notice of planned power outages, and you might be offered alternative heating facilities if your supply is disrupted, and other welfare support. You may also be offered yearly gas safety checks on your boiler.

If you have a power cut, call the national power cut phone line on 105 for free or visit <https://www.powercut105.com/>.

Welcome Spaces

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).

Our Welcome Spaces initiative, have numerous locations across the borough that are providing a range of support and welcome space for residents.

To find a welcome space near you visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/welcomespaces

PAYING YOUR BILLS

Here are some ways that you could get help towards your energy costs this winter.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is extra money from the government to top up your pension income. It also acts as a passport to other entitlements, such as Cold Weather Payments, Council Tax reductions and help with health costs.

To claim Pension Credit, you must be over State Pension age and on a low income. You can check if you qualify at <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility>, or by calling the Pension Credit claim line on **0800 99 1234**.

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 visit <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/householdsupportfund>



PAYING YOUR BILLS

Winter Fuel Payment

For winter 2025/26, the Winter Fuel Payments will range from £100 to £300 depending on age and circumstances.

If your total income is over £35,000, you will still receive the payment, but it will be recovered later via HMRC.

Eligibility includes households with someone born on or before 21 September 1959.

For further details visit <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment> or contact the Winter Fuel Payment Centre - Telephone: **0800 731 0160**

Cold Weather Payment

Cold Weather Payments help people on a low income with their fuel costs. You might qualify if you're getting Pension Credit or certain other benefits like Support for Mortgage Interest.

Each time the average temperature in your area falls below 0°C for seven days in a row between 1 November 2025 and 31 March 2026, you'll receive £25. You should automatically get a payment within 14 working days. This won't affect any of your other benefits.

To find out more about Cold Weather Payments, **visit www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment**

Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount is a government scheme that gives eligible households £150 towards their winter energy costs. Qualifying households will automatically receive the discount for 2025/26 if you receive one of the following means-tested benefits on 25 August (the qualifying date for the payment).

- Housing Benefit,
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA),
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA),
- Income Support,

PAYING YOUR BILLS

- Pension Credit (both the Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit elements will count), or
- Universal Credit.

The money isn't paid to you but will be taken off your energy bill by your energy supplier.

To find out more about the Warm Home Discount Scheme, call **0800 030 9322** or visit **www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme**

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. This includes income and disability benefits, bills and allowances, childcare, housing and travel.

More information can be found at **www.gov.uk/cost-of-living**

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/>**

You can also get advice from Energy Projects Plus at **www.epplus.org.uk** or free phone energy advice line **0800 043 0151**.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Keeping yourself as well as possible is vital in winter. The cold weather and short days can make it more challenging to look after ourselves, so here are some tips and advice.

Try these Five Ways to Wellbeing to help improve on your mood:

- Connect with people,
- Be physically active,
- Learn new skills,
- Take notice (practise mindfulness),
- Give to others.

If you need support for your mood and wellbeing, contact your GP. Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust and Samaritans provide free 24 hours support services (See page 22 for details).

Stay Active

- Keeping active helps your body stay strong, reduces the risk of falls, boosts your mood and helps you stay warm,
- Try to move around at least once every hour,
- Light activities such as making a cup of tea, moving around your home, walking slowly, cleaning, vacuuming, making the bed, or simply standing up can all help,
- If you're able, aim to do some moderate or vigorous activity each week, for example a brisk 10-minute walk for moderate exercise, and running or dancing for vigorous exercise,
- Contact local physical activity and fitness services if needed. Over 60s can get a discount on Go Active memberships. Visit <https://goactive.sthelens.gov.uk/>

For more information on staying active, visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise

EATING WELL

- Hot meals and drinks help keep you warm,
- Eat a balanced diet of different foods from the 5 main food groups alongside your 5 portions of fruit and vegetables,
- Stock up on tinned/frozen food to avoid the need to go out when it's cold or icy,
- Contact food banks/pantries if needed. visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/foodsupport for more details.

For more information on how to eat well, visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

Food Banks

Food banks provide emergency food and compassionate, dignified support to people locked in crisis. There are several food banks available to residents in St Helens Borough, many of which are managed by The Hope Centre charity in St Helens and require a voucher from a relevant local agency. Contact St Helens Foodbank on **01744 26414**.

Community Food Pantries

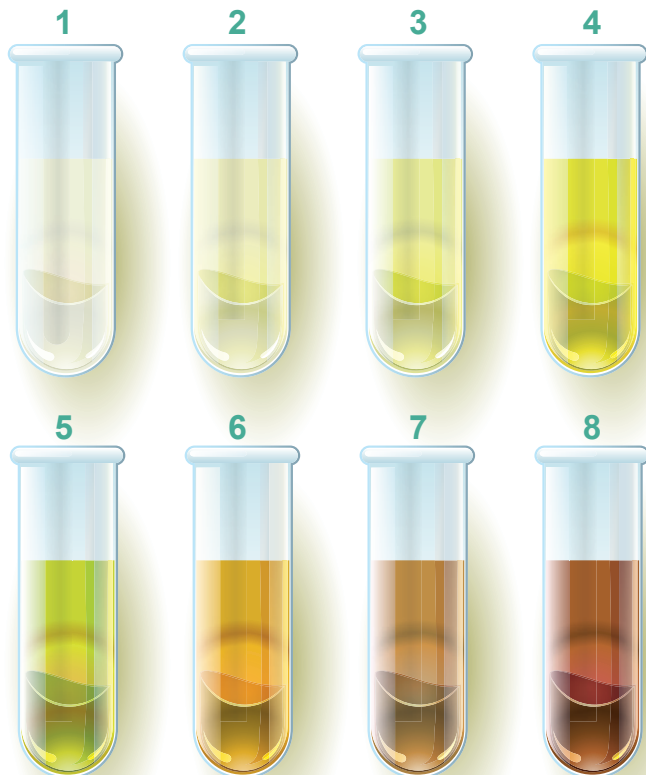
Pantries operate as a member-led neighbourhood hub and are just like a shop, in that you choose the food you want from the shelves. Members pay a small subscription of £5 each week they visit, and in return can choose groceries worth many times more, often saving up to £1,000 a year on shopping bills.

There are several pantries operating across the borough including: Town Centre; Thatto Heath; West Park; Eccleston; Newton le Willows; Sutton; Moss Bank; Haydock and Billinge.

Please visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/foodsupport for the most up to date information.

STAY HYDRATED

- 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,
- Not having enough drinks can make you dehydrated causing symptoms like thirst, dark-coloured urine, headache, dizziness, tiredness, dry mouth, lips, or eyes,
- You can tell if you may be dehydrated by checking your urine colour. 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 that vitamin supplements can turn urine bright yellow for a few hours.



VITAMIN D MATTERS

Everyone should take 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily in autumn and winter, and all year if aged 65+ or at higher risk of low,

- It is safe to combine supplements with food rich in vitamin D such as oily fish, red meat, egg yolks, and fortified cereals,
- A small number of specific medical conditions may mean you should take a different dose or are not able to take vitamin D. If you're unsure, check with your GP,

For more information on vitamin D

visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/



GETTING YOUR JABS

Vaccines are the best protection against flu, COVID-19, pneumonia, and RSV, which can cause serious illness in winter.

- If you're eligible, get your free flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Adults aged 65+, children up to year 11, pregnant people, those with certain health conditions and some other groups are eligible,
- The pneumococcal vaccine protects against pneumonia and is offered to babies, people aged 65+, and those at higher risk,
- The RSV vaccine is available for pregnant people (from 28 weeks) and adults aged 75–79; some babies are offered antibodies for protection,
- Not sure if you're eligible? Speak to your GP or pharmacist,
- If you have symptoms of a flu, Speak to your GP or NHS on **111**. Do not attend the Accident & Emergency unless told to do so.

PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

Simple habits can help stop winter bugs like flu, RSV, pneumonia and norovirus from spreading;

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after the toilet, before eating, or after coughing and sneezing. Use hand sanitisers only when soap and water are not available, or hands are not visibly soiled,
- Use tissues to cover coughs and sneezes, then throw them away straight after,
- Clean surfaces regularly, like door handles, taps and counters,
- Wash clothes and bedding separately at 60°C if contaminated.

CARBON MONOXIDE

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 www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/carbon-monoxide/

SLIPS AND TRIPS

In your home

It's important to make sure your home is safe, especially if you are doing more exercise and activities in it during winter, so:

- use a non-slip bathmat,
- mop up spills immediately,
- have a night-light in the bedroom, or bedside light or torch by your bed in case you need to get up in the night,
- keep your floors clear of trailing leads,
- keep stairs clear from clutter and well-lit,
- do not overload electrical sockets,
- carry a mobile phone with you so you can call for help if you need to.

Being careful outside

If you must go out when it's icy, wear shoes with good grip and a warm lining, and put on thick socks. Keep grit and/or salt to put on your path.

It's a good idea to carry a mobile phone with you if you can. Make sure it's fully charged before you go outside.

SCAMS

You may get calls, emails or messages that are pretending to be from a government service or an energy bill support scheme. If you get a message asking for your personal details (for example, bank details or passwords) this could be a scam.

If you think you've been a victim of an online scam or fraud Contact Action Fraud if you think you've lost money or been hacked because of an online scam or fraud. You can call **0300 123 2040** or report online by visiting <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Stay Warm

St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency	01744 676555
Save Energy Advice Line (SEAL) <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>	0800 043 0151 https://www.epplus.org.uk/projects/save-energy-advice-line/
National Gas Emergency Number <i>If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety.</i>	0800 111 999 (24-hour helpline) If you are deaf or hard of hearing use textphone service on 18001 then 0800 371 787.
SP Energy Networks <i>Offers help and advice on any energy related queries.</i>	0800 001 5400 OR 0330 1010 400 (from a mobile phone) https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/advice.aspx
National Debtline	0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.org
Stepchange Debt Charity	0800 138 1111 www.stepchange.org.uk
St Helens Carers Centre <i>Family Carers can receive free support, advice and services including welfare benefits advice from St Helens Carers Centre.</i>	01744 675 615 www.sthelenscarers.info
Citizens Advice St Helens <i>Provide free, independent and confidential advice that helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems and also influence policymakers.</i>	01744 737866 http://sthelenscab.org.uk/

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Stay Well

St Helens Wellbeing Service <i>Offers access to a wide range of healthy living and wellbeing support through a 'one stop shop'.</i>	01744 371111 chcp.sthelens@nhs.net https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/
St Helens Contact Cares <i>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.</i>	01744 676767 https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactcares
Urgent mental health support <i>If you need urgent mental health support, please call this 24/7 freephone crisis line. For all ages – children, young people and adults.</i>	Call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option - you can also go online at https://111.nhs.uk/
Samaritans <i>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.</i>	116 123
HOPELINEUK <i>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.</i>	0800 068 4141
Shout <i>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.</i>	Text SHOUT to 85258

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Stay Safe

Merseyside Police	101 (non-emergency number)
NHS	111 (non-emergency medical help)
Police, Fire and Ambulance emergencies	999
St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency <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>	01744 676555 homeimprovementagency@sthelens.gov.uk https://hia.sthelens.gov.uk/
St Helens Borough Council Contact Centre <i>Access to the Customer Services Team at St Helens Borough Council</i>	01744 676789 contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/

Thank you for reading this booklet and, if you have any ideas on how the booklet could be improved, please don't hesitate to let us know by contacting the council's Affordable Warmth Team on **01744 676555** or using the contact us form on the council's website - **<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/contactus>**



Councillor Trisha Long
Stronger Communities

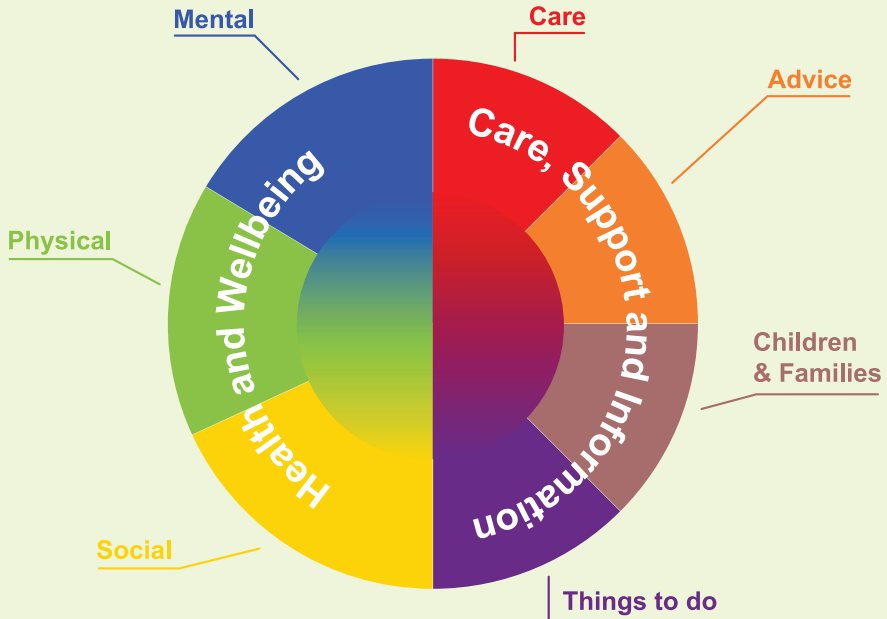


Councillor Andy Bowden
Adult Social Care & Health



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