

KEEPING WELL IN WINTER AND BEYOND

WINTER WELLBEING GUIDE 2023/2024

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Keeping St Helens well

It is important we look after each other, especially in the winter months. We know that in winter, there is an increase in people suffering with illnesses such as respiratory infections, and asthma. 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.

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

We are also aware that over the last couple of winters, the rising cost of living may mean that people may struggle to have enough money to heat their homes and eat well. Cold homes and a poor diet can negatively affect health and this issue is particularly pressing in St Helens where an estimated one in seven households live in fuel poverty (households unable to heat or cool their homes to a suitable temperature).

We want to support people and offer useful advice to keep well and warm this winter. This year, we hope that many people will benefit from the helpful content in our 'Keeping well in winter and beyond' guides and access the range of help available.

We are thankful to the various partners and agencies who have helped us pull together this information.



Ruth du Plessis
Director of Public Health



Councillor Anthony Burns
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing,
Culture & Heritage

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

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Top 6 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. **Avoid close contact with others, especially the vulnerable, if you feel unwell or have symptoms** - such as a high temperature, new cough, diarrhoea or vomiting.
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. **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), 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.

Some sources of support

- 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)
- 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

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 avoid being unwell 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 keep your diet varied with protein, carbohydrates and fats.
- 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,

Find details of local food banks and pantries here: <https://www.flipsnack.com/F5F989CC5A8/community-food-provision-in-st-helens-sept-23/full-view.html>

Vitamin D

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

- Take vitamin D supplements during the winter months when you are less likely to get it directly from sunlight.
- **Some people have medical conditions that mean they may not be able to safely take as much. If in doubt, you should consult your doctor.**
- If you can take vitamin D supplements, 10 micrograms a day will be enough for most people.
- **Do not take more than 100 micrograms (4,000 IU) of vitamin D a day as it could be harmful.** 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.
- If your doctor has recommended you take a different amount of vitamin D, you should follow their advice. Check with your GP or pharmacist whether you are unable to take vitamin D supplement for any reason. If this is the case, vitamin D is also found in a small number of foods.
- Eat food rich in vitamin D including oily fish (salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel), red meat, liver, egg yolks and fortified foods (some fat spreads and breakfast cereals).
- Taking a Vitamin D supplement as well as eating foods rich in vitamin D and spending a lot of time outside in sunshine is not a problem.

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 NHS website for examples of ways we can move well at home:**
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/strength-exercises/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/>
- If you want to improve your activity levels, contact St Helens Wellbeing Service at chcp.sthelens@nhs.net or call 01744 371111, or contact Gemma Ireland from Sports Development at gemmaireland@sthelens.gov.uk or call 01744 675403 or visit the Sports Development webpage: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/sport>

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.

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 a scarf around the mouth to protect them from cold air to reduce their 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

Improve your 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 an emergency 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 help you understand, manage & improve your mental 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?

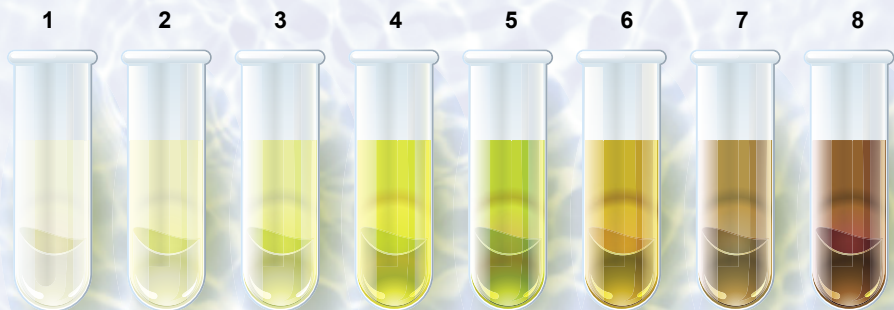
- Keep properly hydrated to maintain good health.
- Drink 1.5 to 2 litres a day which is about 8 hot drinks or glasses of fluid a day.
- Drink regularly - water, tea, coffee, and sugar-free drinks all count.

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.

Common illnesses in the winter

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, such as 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 for flu because antibiotics don't work with viral infections.

Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu, protect yourself, your loved ones and those particularly vulnerable in our community. 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 2023
- All primary school-aged children (Reception to Year 6)
- Some secondary school-aged children in eligible groups (Years 7 to 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 (including those who will be 65 by 31st March 2024)
- 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 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, had a stroke, problems with the spleen, or are seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 and above).
- Speak with your GP or chemist about the vaccine or 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.

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.

COVID-19

COVID-19, along with many other respiratory infections such as influenza (flu), can spread easily and cause serious illness in some people. This is because these viruses mutate, therefore 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 infection onto others. Most people with COVID-19 will feel better within a few weeks. As we learn to live safely with coronavirus, there are actions we can all take to help reduce the risk of catching COVID-19. 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 you have symptoms (temperature, new cough, unwell), try and stay at home and keep your distance from others. 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.
- You should be able to look after yourself at home, but if you have any concerns contact your GP or NHS 111 for further advice.
- Get vaccinated, especially if you are in a vulnerable group or care for vulnerable people.
- Make sure there is adequate ventilation if meeting others indoors.
- Practise good hygiene: – wash your hands – catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue – clean your surroundings frequently.
- If you have symptoms and are unable to remain at home, consider wearing a face mask in enclosed spaces, including public transport.
- Follow any changes to national guidance on COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>)

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. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and vaccine programmes are continuously monitored.

- Visit the NHS COVID-19 vaccination website for more information and to check your eligibility <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>
- The Living Well Service will run weekly drop-in clinics in St Helens providing COVID-19 vaccines, health checks and wider wellbeing guidance at central locations to our community. Please refer to <https://www.cwp.nhs.uk/livingwellservice> for an updated timetable outlining the next local sessions. You do not need an appointment to attend.

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

- **Pensioner Cost of Living Payment** - If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024, you will get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment from November 2023.

The full amount of Winter Fuel Payment (including the Pensioner Cost of Living Payment) you will get for winter 2023 to 2024 depends on when you were born and your circumstances during the qualifying dates.

You can get a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024 if you were born before 25 September 1957.

You will be sent a letter in October or November telling you how much Winter Fuel Payment you'll get if you're eligible.

- **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-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs>

Maximise your income

Make sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to. 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 or 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

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** - You could get £150 off your electricity bill for winter 2023 to 2024. It's a one-off discount applied to your electricity bill between early October 2023 and 31 March 2024. You'll usually get the discount automatically if you meet the required criteria under one of the core groups.

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

If you might be eligible, you'll get a letter by early January 2024.

If you do not get a letter and you think you're eligible, you must contact the Warm Home Discount Scheme before 29 February 2024. 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 25 September 1957 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. The amount you get includes a 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment'. This is between £150 and £300. You'll get this extra amount in winter 2023 to 2024. If you're eligible, you'll get a letter in October or November saying how much you'll get. It is paid automatically between November and December if you have claimed before or are in receipt of some other benefits. Others will need to apply for it.

To find out more about Winter Fuel Payments, call 0800 731 0160 between 8:00am – 6:00pm, Monday to Friday. You can also textphone 0800 731 0464 or visit www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

- **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

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 £100 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 - saving approximately £70 per year.
- 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-tariff-or-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 the priority services register please visit the following website - <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register>

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/>

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/updates/food>).

Food banks

Food banks provide emergency food and compassionate, dignified support to people locked in crisis. There are 7 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	01744 26414	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, 11.00 – 13.00 Check our Facebook page for Saturday opening times.
Derbyshire Hill Family & Community Centre	01744 607907	Derbyshire Hill Rd Parr St Helens WA9 2PW	Wednesday 11.00 – 13.00

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 £4 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 six community food pantries available to residents in St Helens Town Centre, Thatto Heath, Haydock and West Park, Sutton and Eccleston.

Name	Address	Phone number and email	Opening times
HOPE Pantry	Wesley Methodist Church Corporation Street St Helens WA10 1LF	01744 26414	Tuesday 11.00 – 13.00
St Matthew's Centre Pantry	St Matthews Grove Thatto Heath St Helens WA10 3SE	07810514634 stmatthewscentrepantry@ hotmail.com	Monday 18:30 – 20:00 Wednesday 08:45 – 11:30
St Mark's T.A.N.G.O Pantry	Park Street Haydock St Helens WA11 0BH	01744 602641 foodpantry@ stmarkshaydock.org	Thursday 08.50 – 11.00
St Luke's Pantry	Knowsley Road St Helens WA10 4PU	07547989140 stlukespantry@gmail.com	Wednesday 15.30 – 17.30
Sutton Pantry	St Michael & All Angels Church, Gartons Lane, St Helens, WA9 2RA	07765 736199	Sunday 15:30 – 17:30
Cornerstone Pantry	The Lester Drive Centre, 5 Lester Drive, St Helens, WA10 5BF	07894270566 graham@conerstone mommunitychurch.co.uk	Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00

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 £4 membership 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.

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
Wargrave Big Local Community Hub	143 Alder Street, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 8HR	Monday 10:30 – 12:00
Sutton Family Centre	Ellamsbridge Road, St Helens, WA9 3PX	Tuesday 10:30 – 12:00
Park Farm Community Centre	54 Kentmere Avenue, Carr Mill, St Helens, WA11 7PG	Thursday 10:30 – 12:00
Peasley Cross URC	Beaufort Street, St Helens, WA9 3BQ	Friday 08:45 – 10:15

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 676666 or email educationbenefits@sthelens.gov.uk

Useful & emergency contact numbers

<p>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></p>	<p>0800 043 0151</p> <p>Website: https://www.epplus.org.uk/projects/save-energy-advice-line/</p>
<p>National Gas Emergency Number <i>If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety.</i></p>	<p>0800 111 999 (24-hour helpline)</p> <p>If you are deaf or hard of hearing use textphone service on 18001 then 0800 371 787.</p>
<p>SP Energy Networks <i>Offers help and advice on any energy related queries.</i></p>	<p>0800 001 5400</p> <p>OR</p> <p>0330 1010 400 (from a mobile phone)</p> <p>Website: https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/advice.aspx</p>
<p>Electricity North West Ltd <i>In the event of a power cut, please contact your local network operator.</i></p>	<p>0800 195 4141</p> <p>Call the national power cut line on 105</p> 
<p>United Utilities <i>If you have no water, a leak, a burst pipe, or low pressure</i></p>	<p>0345 6723 723</p>
<p>Merseyside Police</p>	<p>101 (non-emergency number)</p>
<p>NHS</p>	<p>111 (non-emergency medical help)</p>
<p>Police, Fire and Ambulance emergencies</p>	<p>999</p>
<p>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></p>	<p>01744 676555</p> <p>Email: homeimprovementagency@sthelens.gov.uk</p> <p>Website: https://hia.sthelens.gov.uk/</p>
<p>St Helens Borough Council Contact Centre <i>Access to the Customer Services Team at St Helens Borough Council</i></p>	<p>01744 676789</p> <p>Email: contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk</p>

<p>St Helens Wellbeing Service <i>Offers access to a wide range of healthy living and wellbeing support through a 'one stop shop'.</i></p>	<p>01744 371111 Email: chcp.sthelens@nhs.net Website: https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/</p>
<p>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></p>	<p>01744 676767 Website: https://www.sthelensccg.nhs.uk/local-services/contact-cares/</p>
<p>Debt or money worries help <i>If you are struggling with debt, you can get help and advice that you can trust.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepchange Debt Charity - 0800 138 1111 www.stepchange.org.uk • PayPlan - 0800 280 2816 www.payplan.com • National Debtline - 0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.org • 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 • Money Helper website - www.moneyhelper.org.uk Offers a list of free debt advice services that could help.
<p>St Helens food support <i>If you need advice and help to get healthy and affordable food locally.</i></p>	<p>For a list of local food banks and pantries and their contact details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See pages 15 to 18 of this calendar under the 'Food support' section • Halton & St Helens Voluntary and Community Action guide to community food provision - https://www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk/updates/food

<p>Welcome spaces <i>Offer a place you can go to get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company and in some places, you can get refreshments</i></p>	<p>For a list of welcome spaces and their contact details, please visit: https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/welcomespaces</p>
<p>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></p>	<p>Call 01744 737866 Website: http://sthelenscab.org.uk/</p>
<p>Mental health and wellbeing support <i>Provide advice and support to help you if you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersey Care 24hr Mental Health Crisis Line: Call 0800 051 1508 <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> • Samaritans: Call 116 123 <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> • HOPELINEUK: Call 0800 068 4141 <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> • Shout: Text REACH to 85258 <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>
<p>Halton & St Helens Voluntary and Community Action <i>Provides advice, information and development support services to voluntary, community and faith organisations and volunteers in the boroughs of St Helens and Halton</i></p>	<p>01744 457100 Email: info@haltonsthelensvca.org.uk</p>



ST HELENS
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