

**Key messages for you to support our communities keep well this winter**

Please help support local public and NHS services this winter by helping to share some simple key messages. These services continue to be under significant pressure, so it makes sense to equip and empower as many people as possible to make steps to keep themselves well and to make sure they know where to find information which helps with access to appropriate services.

This document is for anyone (including front-line staff, volunteers, community leaders, councillors, staff from community organisations and groups) to use who come into contact with people who are vulnerable, or likely to benefit from support from health and care services. We ask that while you are in contact with others, please share this information – this could include community newsletters, leaflets, social media and by email to others where you can.

There are five steps for keeping well this winter we would like you to remember and share:

**1. Stay warm**

**2. Keep well**

**3. Look out for others**

**4. Look after your mental health**

**5. Get more information**

1. **Stay warm**

Living in a cold home is not just uncomfortable, it can be quite hazardous too. If you can, make sure your home stays at a temperature of around 18°C. This can help prevent serious health problems including heart attaches, strokes, pneumonia and depression. The cold and damp weather, ice, snow and high winds can worsen any existing health problems, increase the risk of a fall, and make us more vulnerable to respiratory winter illnesses. But there are many things you can do to stay well this winter.

**Tips to help you stay warm:**

* If you can get outside for a walk during the day in winter you'll not only maintain your fitness you'll be helping to banish the winter blues. Remember to wear thin layers of cotton, wool or fleecy fibres to keep you warm.
* If you are going outside, make sure you wear shoes with good grip and a scarf around the mouth to protect you from the cold air, and to reduce their risk of chest infections.
* To minimise the risks to your health, if you're not moving about as much at home and inactive for long periods you should wear warm clothing indoors and if possible, heat your home to at least 18°C (65F).
* If possible, try to keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed.
* Keep your bedroom windows closed at night - breathing in cold air can increase the risk of chest infections.

Keeping warm is key during the winter months but we want you to stay safe too. Here are some top safety tips when it comes to some ways of heating your home:

* If you use an electric blanket always check it regularly for signs of wear or damage. Never use an electric blanket and a hot water bottle at the same time. If you're in any doubt about your blanket, contact the manufacturer before you use it to make sure that it is safe. It may need to be replaced.
* Only use (portable) heaters that are in good working order and keep them a safe distance from combustible materials such as furniture– do not use them for drying clothes. Switch them off if left unattended. Supervise children and pets around them to prevent burns and other injuries.
* Candles should be secured in proper holders, away from materials that can catch fire. Never leave lit candles unattended.
* Rooms with gas heaters and fires should be well ventilated. Appliances should be maintained regularly. Consider having a carbon monoxide alarm installed too.
* Make sure you have working smoke detectors fitted on each floor of your home.
* Use fire guards to prevent embers igniting nearby combustibles. Keep the chimney swept regularly and don’t sit or stand too close.
* Wheat Bags – Check the manufacturer’s instructions and your microwave settings carefully as wheat bags can easily overheat.

**2. Keep well**

Here are some simple things you can do to help yourself stay well:

**Get vaccinated**

Vaccinations are a high priority action for the NHS - they protect people from serious illness and supports NHS and adult social care resilience. Vaccinations available:

* **Flu** – Many people get seriously ill from flu, including having complications like bronchitis or pneumonia, and every winter thousands of people die – including children.
	+ **Eligibility** –
		- aged 2 and 3 years on 31 August 2024
		- eligible school aged children (Reception to Year 11)
		- those aged 6 months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups
		- pregnant women
		- all those aged 65 years and over
		- those in long-stay residential care homes
		- carers, those in receipt of carer’s allowance or main carer of an older or disabled person
		- household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
		- frontline health and social care staff
* **RSV** – This is a new vaccination for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and marks a big step forward in protecting older people aged 75 to 79 and newborn babies. The vaccine is available not only in the run up to winter but all year round. Symptoms include a cough, sore throat, sneezing and a runny or blocked nose. Although RSV usually gets better by itself, it can be dangerous for young babies and can lead to bronchiolitis which makes it hard for babies to breathe. It can also be serious for older people, particularly those with heart or lung conditions or a weakened immune system, as it can lead to serious illnesses such as pneumonia.
	+ **Eligibility** –
		- From 1 September 2024, all adults turning 75 will be invited to get their RSV vaccine by their GP practice, and they will remain eligible until the day before their 80th birthday.
		- Women who are 28 weeks pregnant or more will be able to get a vaccine too, giving vital protection to their baby in the first few months of life. Women can speak to their maternity service or GP surgery to book a vaccine appointment.
* **COVID19** –
	+ **Eligibility** -
		- residents in a care home for older adults
		- all adults aged 65 years and over
		- persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group

**Pharmacy First**

If you, your child, or someone you care for starts to feel ill, first of all get help and advice for treating cold and flu symptoms from your local pharmacy. Available on the high-street, community pharmacy teams have the right clinical training to give people the health advice they need, with no appointment necessary and private consultations available. They will signpost patients to other local services where necessary.

Community pharmacies can now offer treatment for seven common conditions without patients needing to see a GP, as part of a major transformation in the way the NHS delivers care. Highly trained pharmacists can assess and treat patients for common health problems without the need for a GP appointment.

Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help you and your family this winter. Always keep medicines out of sight and reach of children - high, lockable cupboard in a cool, dry place is ideal. Regularly check the expiry dates on any medicine you have or are about to use. If a medicine is past its expiry date, don't use it or throw it away. Take it to your pharmacy where it can be disposed of safely.

**Don't go to the emergency department unless you have an emergency**

If you are in any doubt, contact 111 either by phone or online at [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) to get clinical advice or direction to the most appropriate services for treatment.

**Please remember to cancel any unwanted appointments**

If you do have an appointment with a GP or other NHS service that you no longer need, please remember to contact your GP practice or the NHS service you have your appointment with to cancel. It doesn’t matter if this is only 30 minutes beforehand, NHS services are so busy they will always have someone on standby to take the appointment.

**Other tips to help you keep well:**

* Stay as active as you can, regular exercise can help improve your physical and mental health.
* Try to stock up on food essentials such as long-life milk, tins of soup and bread in the freezer to reduce the need to go out during extreme bad weather.
* Make sure you have enough medication and remember to get repeat prescriptions in advance of any predicted severe weather.
* Be aware that many surgeries and pharmacies will close over the Christmas and New Year period.

**3. Look out for others**

* Keeping an eye on elderly or vulnerable friends, relatives and neighbours who can be affected by the cold weather or have medical conditions, ensuring they follow these winter messages
* Be aware of anyone in your neighbourhood who lives alone, especially if they are elderly or frail.

**4. Look after your mental health**

Winter can be a hard time for some people. Colder weather and darker nights may mean it's harder to get out and about and could leave you feeling isolated. For advice, information and support go to [LSC Integrated Care Board :: Mental health support](https://www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/support), which provides a wide range of information about where you can go for support with your mental health. In addition, [Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Talking Therapies](https://www.lscft.nhs.uk/services/service-finder-z/talking-therapies), is free to Lancashire residents and people can contact the service themselves.

In times of crisis, help is available. If you need help straight away, you can:

* Ring 999 if there is an immediate risk to life
* Call NHS 111 and select the mental health option to get the help you need. Available 24/7, you will speak to a mental health advisor who will listen to you and help you find the right support
* Contact the Initial Response Service (Mental Health Crisis Line) which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 0800 953 0110. It is staffed by trained mental health professionals who are able to provide assessment and referrals to appropriate services. Ring it if you need to access services or for advice about someone who needs treatment or support
* Contact the Wellbeing Helpline and Texting Service, phone lines are available Monday to Friday 7pm to 11pm staffed by volunteers and those with lived experience, who can offer emotional support - ring if you want to chat about your mental health or are lonely. Ring the helpline on 0800 915 4640 or by texting Hello between 10am and 11pm Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday 4pm to 11pm to 07860 022846.
* If you have urgent concerns about someone's social circumstances, it may be more appropriate to call social services. You can contact the Out of Hours Adult Social Care team on 0300 123 6722.

For more information about mental health support visit [LSC Integrated Care Board :: LSC MH directory (icb.nhs.uk)](https://www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/support/lsc-mh-directory) to access and/or download the Lancashire and South Cumbria Mental Health Directory.

People concerned with spending more than they can afford at Christmas or being in debt can find more information at [LSC Integrated Care Board : Debt and money (icb.nhs.uk)](https://www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/support/debt-advice-and-support)

**5. Other help and support available**

You can find a wealth of information to help look after yourself, your friends, your family and community on the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria website. To stay healthy, prevent illness and get the right care, please visit: [www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/your-local-services](https://www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/your-local-services)

In addition, there is lots of information available from organisations (both local and national) offering help and support during winter: -

**AGE UK South Cumbria**

[AGE UK Barrow and District](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/barrow/) and [Age UK South Lakeland](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/southlakeland/) offers lots of services for older people and their carers, including free help and support in relation to pensioner benefits and entitlements. Telephone 01229 831425 for Barrow or 030 300 30003 for South Lakeland (Kendal), or email contact@ageukbarrow.org.uk or [Age UKSL | Contact us](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/southlakeland/about-us/contact-us/). Age UK in Cumbria have offices, or shops in Barrow-in-Furness, Ulverston, Kendal, Bowness, Milnthorpe, and Grange-over-Sands.

**Cosy Homes in Cumbria**

The ‘Cosy Homes in Cumbria’ (CAfS) scheme is a countywide energy efficiency and affordable warmth initiative. If you meet certain eligibility criteria and your property is suitable then you may be able to have a number of energy efficiency improvements installed in your home for free (subject to survey) or heavily discounted. Advice and 'able to pay' offers are also available.

Cosy Homes in Cumbria (CAfS) is a partnership of leading organisations, including the local authorities in Cumbria, offering residents in the region access to grants, advice and support on a range of money saving energy measures, to help you heat and insulate your home.

Visit the [Cold to Cosy Homes Cumbria - free energy advice - CAfS](https://cafs.org.uk/cold-to-cosy-homes-cumbria-old/) website or call 01768 216 500.

**Some practical tips on preventing, reducing and treating damp and mould:**

* Try to dry washing outside or in a tumble dryer (externally vented), rather than on radiators
* Keep lids on pans when cooking
* When running a bath, run the cold water first. This will reduce steam by around 90%
* Don’t use gas appliances to heat your home – these produce lots of moisture
* Ventilation is key! When cooking or bathing, keep the room doors closed and open a window for 10 minutes or so afterwards
* Do not block trickle vents
* Open a couple of windows when you wake up. Open one slightly downstairs and another slightly upstairs, ideally on the opposite side of the house
* Your heating system will actually work more efficiently if it is warming up cooler, dryer air. Warming up the warm, moist air will take longer and cost more
* Try to keep your home at a steady temperature, rather than having no heating on while you are out during the day and then heating it up quickly when you get home. Heating just one or two rooms will cause worse condensation in the rooms left unheated
* Remove excess mould with a damp cloth. Do not brush or use a vacuum cleaner as this will spread the spores
* Use a mould remover, diluted bleach or a saline solution to remove the rest. Follow the instructions and use gloves and safety glasses
* To redecorate, use fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste

**Help with the rising cost of living**

Lancashire County Council provides a range of help and support with the cost of living, including benefits and financial help, support with food, health and wellbeing, getting work and paying for childcare. Visit their website at [Cost of Living Support - staying warm this winter | Westmorland and Furness Council](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flegacy.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk%2Fcostofliving%2Fstayingwarm.asp&data=05%7C02%7Cjeremy.scholey%40nhs.net%7C80ec3fe6011e4aa0712608dd139caf94%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C0%7C638688285866307908%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FCYkR3edimJMkBQFGuh1R%2BK0WZlGG134%2BlhO0zzs98k%3D&reserved=0) to find out how they can help you including information about the Household Support Fund, and support in your local area. This includes information about energy support schemes and the Government’s [Help for Households](https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/).

**Pension credit**

If you are of pensionable age you may be able to claim extra help through Pension Credit. You can [apply for Pension Credit online at GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim?source=MKT024&advsrcSuggest=MKT024) or by calling 0800 99 1234. A friend or family member can call for you if you need support.

**Priority Services Register**

Check if you're eligible to register on your energy company's Priority Services Register, a free support service for people in vulnerable situations. For more information visit the [Ofgem website](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-advice-households/join-your-suppliers-priority-services-register).

**Warm spaces**

The warm spaces scheme has dedicated spaces to use during the day to keep warm such as the library. The [Event Hub - Furness For You](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffurnessforyou.org.uk%2Fevent-hub%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cjeremy.scholey%40nhs.net%7C80ec3fe6011e4aa0712608dd139caf94%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C0%7C638688285866696014%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4VFr8uAyKahQuBHWwM21Y%2FejUm8TjeBCMdhCTUc5EOo%3D&reserved=0) webpage contains information about warm spaces and allows you to search for warm spaces available in each of the district councils.

**Homelessness and rough sleeping**

During winter, sleeping on the streets poses even more of a risk to life than normal. There are however a number of support options for those who sleep rough, are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. If you see somebody, or know somebody, who is rough sleeping you can report this via [Street link](https://thestreetlink.org.uk/).

**Practical tips for rough sleepers to try and protect against the cold:**

* Try and find a sheltered place
* Wear layers of thin clothing, use a sleeping bag and blankets
* Avoid sleeping directly on the ground by, for example, sleeping on layers of card

For those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, you can contact your local councils’ housing advice and homelessness team. The table below contains the contact information for localities within Westmorland and Furness.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Council** | **Homelessness Webpage** | **Opening hours** | **Contact number** | **Online enquiry form or email** | **Out-of-hours contact number** |
| Barrow | [Homelessness | Westmorland and Furness Council](https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/residents/council-housing/homelessness) | 9am – 5pm all days except Friday (9am – 4.30pm) | 01229 876599 | [Housing Assistance Referral Portal](https://hpa2.org/referral/FormPage.aspx) | 01229 833311 |
| Eden | [Homeless advice for people in Eden district](https://www.eden.gov.uk/housing-services/homeless/) | 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday | 01768 861499 | housingoptions@edenha.org.uk | 0800 0614232 |
| South Lakeland | [southlakeland.gov.uk/housing/homeless/](https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/housing/homeless/) | 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday | 01539 793199 | homelessness@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk | 01229 833311 |

Homelessness advice can also be provided by Shelter Lancashire who are based at Blackburn Central Library. Contact Shelter on 0808 800 4444 or in an emergency call them on 0808 1644 6600.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding these key messages or insight from the conversations you have, please share it with us. Please email the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board team at: lscicb.ice@nhs.net