

Public Health and Wellbeing Cold Weather Messages and Support Available This Winter



Avoid a Fall this Winter!

Icy pavements and roads can be extremely slippery. Take extra care if you go out, and wear boots or shoes with good grip on the soles.

Remember that black ice on pavements or roads might not be clearly visible.



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Stay well this winter

With the added pressures of Covid-19 this winter we want to remind you how you can continue to stay well throughout the colder months.

Certain groups of people are particularly vulnerable to cold weather, including:

- Older people, especially those over 65 years old and those who are frail or socially isolated
- People with pre-existing chronic medical conditions
- Children under 5
- People with cognitive impairment, mental health conditions or learning difficulties
- People living in deprived circumstances such as experiencing fuel poverty
- People experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping
- Pregnant women

Many of these groups are also at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19, as well as other winter illnesses such as flu. This leaflet gives further advice on how to stay well this winter and lookout for those are more vulnerable.

Look after yourself

- Food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy
- Exercise is good for you and helps to keep you warm and healthy. If possible, try to move around at least once an hour
- Wear lots of thin layers – clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and maintain body heat
- Wear well-fitting slippers with a good grip indoors and shoes with a good grip outside to prevent trips, slips and falls
- Make sure you have spare medicine at home in case you are unable to go out
- Check with Ofgem <http://bit.ly/2IKdFig> tel: **020 7901 7000** if you are eligible for inclusion on the Priority Services register operated by your water and power suppliers.



Recommended Minimum Indoor Temperatures for Homes in winter



Heating homes to at least 18°C (65F) in winter is recommended for the health of a sedentary person, wearing suitable clothing.

Daytime recommendations

- The 18°C (65F) threshold is particularly important for people aged over 65 or with pre-existing medical conditions
- The 18°C (65F) threshold also applies to healthy people aged under 65. However, if they are wearing appropriate clothing and are active, they may wish to heat their homes to slightly less than 18°C (65F)

Overnight recommendations

- Maintaining the 18°C (65F) threshold overnight may be beneficial to protect the health of those aged over 65 or with pre-existing medical conditions. They should continue to use sufficient bedding, clothing and thermal blankets or heating aids as appropriate
- The 18°C (65F) threshold overnight may be needed less for healthy people aged under 65. They should continue to use sufficient bedding, clothing and thermal blankets or heating aids as appropriate
- Keep your home well ventilated to help prevent condensation, damp and to stop the spread of viruses such as COVID-19. This is particularly important if you live in a house with multiple generations, multiple occupants or with someone who is high risk.
- Use your electric blanket as instructed but don't use a hot water bottle with it as it could be dangerous
- Don't use a gas cooker or oven to heat your home as there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Make sure you have a supply of heating oil, LPG or solid fuel if you are not on mains gas or electricity

Look after others



- Check on older neighbors or relatives in a Covid secure way to make sure they are safe and warm especially if they live alone or have a serious illness.

Anyone who needs support with food, finance, help to self-isolate or any other support, should get in contact with the Community Support Hub on: **01635 503579**, or by email: westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk

Keep the warmth in by



- Fitting draught proofing to seal any gaps around windows and doors
- Making sure you have loft insulation. And if you have cavity walls, make sure they are insulated too
- Insulate your hot water cylinder and pipes
- Draw your curtains at dusk to help keep heat inside your rooms
- Make sure your radiators are not obstructed by furniture and tuck long curtains behind radiators

Prepare for when it snows



- If you live on or near a hill, now is the time to buy your own supply of salt from local garden centres or builders' merchants
- Where council salt bins are provided the salt is only intended to be used on the nearby public roads and footpaths.
- Don't forget to buy a snow shovel and to use it before any snowfall compacts

Get financial support



- There are grants, benefits and sources of advice to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It's worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to before winter sets in, terms and conditions apply <http://bit.ly/2kwLuz> tel: **0345 6039439**



Cold weather messages for children and parents

- 1.** Children with flu have the same symptoms as adults including fever, chills, aching muscles, headache, stuffy nose, dry cough and a sore throat lasting up to a week. Flu can be a very unpleasant illness for children with potentially serious complications, including bronchitis and pneumonia. The flu vaccine is routinely given on the NHS as an annual nasal spray to children. Please see NHS Choices for latest age criteria and other information. <http://bit.ly/JegyAG>
- 2.** Put several layers of clothing on your child and make sure their head, neck and hands are covered.
- 3.** In drier winter air, children lose more water through their breath. Keep them drinking and try giving them warm drinks and soup.
- 4.** Make sure your children are wearing footwear with a good grip to reduce the risk of slipping and falling on icy pavements and take your time when walking.
- 5.** On dark mornings and evenings, it is recommended that children wear or carry something to make them more visible when making journeys. This should be something bright or fluorescent during the day and something reflective at dusk and in the dark.
- 6.** Signs of frostbite are pale, grey or blistered skin on the fingers, ears, nose, and toes. If you think your child has frostbite, bring your child indoors and put the affected area in warm water. Signs of hypothermia are shivering, slurred speech, and unusual clumsiness. If you think your child has hypothermia, call 999 immediately.

Support this winter

Heat The Homes Counties



In West Berkshire you may be eligible for a grant if your household income after tax, Council Tax and energy costs is less than £35,000 per year, or if someone in your household receives benefits.

Call: **01344 888 930**

Visit: <https://www.heatthehomecounties.org.uk/apply-now> for more info.

Covid Winter Grant



If you are in financial hardship due to the pandemic you may be eligible for support for food, utility bills, water bills for household purposes (including drinking, washing, cooking, central heating, sewerage and sanitary purposes), or other related essentials

The COVID Winter Grant Scheme will run from 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. You may make more than one claim during this timeframe depending upon your circumstances. The deadline for applications is 15 March 2021.

For further info on the grant and how to apply visit:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-support>

Call the Community Hub on: **01635 503579** (The Community Support Hub is open during office hours between 8.30am and 5pm)

Green Homes Grant



You may be able to apply for a grant of up to £10,000 towards the cost of making your home more energy efficient.

For details visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme>

Call: **0300 131 0053**

Winter Fuel Payments



If you were born on or before 5th October 1954 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you are eligible and you get the State Pension or another social security benefit

Visit the gov.uk page to find out more:

<https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/eligibility>

Warm House Discount Scheme



You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020 to 2021 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.

You may qualify for the governments Warm House Discount Scheme if you:

- get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit - known as the 'core group'
- you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme - known as the 'broader group'

For more info see: <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Call: **0800 731 0214**

Tax Relief



You may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you have to work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if you have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

For more info visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>

West Berkshire-Collective Energy Switch



As a West Berkshire resident, you can participate in an energy saving switching incentive known as the West Berkshire Collective Energy Switch. This is a scheme the Council runs in partnership with iChoosr's Big Community Switch.

Collective switching allows people to be grouped into a bulk switch ensuring they are successfully switching their energy suppliers and paying less for their energy bills.

More information can be found at:

<https://bigcommunityswitch.co.uk/west-berkshire/home>

Cold Weather Payment



You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits or Support for Mortgage Interest. You do not need to apply. If you're eligible to get a Cold Weather Payment, you'll be paid it automatically.

You'll get a payment if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below over 7 consecutive days.

Tell your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus office if you think you should have received a Cold Weather Payment but you have not.

For more info visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment/eligibility>

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