

Ready for Winter

Briefing for Community Resilience Groups

A wide range of information on being 'Ready for Winter' can be found on the Highland Council website <https://www.highland.gov.uk/readyforwinter>. This includes links to emergency contacts, water safety advice and Met Office weather forecasts.

This briefing is aimed at local community resilience groups and provides a summary of some key information that you may find helpful.

Additionally, for up-to-date information you can also subscribe to: [News RSS feed](#) at <https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/archive> and follow the Council's social media at <https://twitter.com/HighlandCouncil> and <https://www.facebook.com/highlandcouncil>.

Covid-19

For anyone in need of urgent Covid-19 related support over the festive period, such as emergency food supplies or prescription collection or other emergency support arising from the need to self-isolate, the Council's free helpline for Covid-19 will remain open over the festive period:

Tel. 0300 303 1362.

This helpline is available Monday – Friday 9-5pm. It is available for emergency calls outwith this time and this includes the Christmas period and bank holidays.

Benefits and financial support

Information on winter related benefits can be found at <https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/22/benefits/category/479>.

The Council's *Worrying About Money?* guide covers information for people waiting for claims to be assessed as well as those already receiving benefits and can be found at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/102970/benefit_advice.

Topics including advice on what to do if anyone finds themselves having a sudden loss of income or if their statutory sick pay does not cover their living expenses. There is also information on how to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund, maximising income and benefit advice, debt advice and how to challenge a decision.

Depending upon household circumstances, some may qualify for extra financial support during the winter, these include

- **UK Government's Winter Fuel Payment:** A Winter Fuel payment is a one-off, tax-free payment of between £100 and £300 made during the winter to help with heating costs; it is made to households with someone over Pension Credit age. Most payments are made automatically during November and December. If someone applies for the first time, they

will receive their payment by Christmas. The amount a household will receive each winter can vary according to their personal circumstances, such as age or other people living in the house who are also eligible can increase the eligible amount.

If you think you qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment and have not automatically received it, then you will need to apply. Contact the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline by: Telephone: 0800 731 0160 (8am - 6pm, Mondays to Friday) or textphone: 0800 731 0176.

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

- **UK Government's Cold Weather Payment:** A Cold Weather payment is a £25 payment to help with fuel costs during periods of very cold weather. The period of cold weather must cover seven consecutive days, between 1 November and 31 March, when the average temperature must be zero degrees Celsius or below. The £25 can be paid multiple times if the 7 consecutive day criteria are met. You don't need to apply. If you're eligible to get a cold weather payment, you'll be paid it automatically. However, if you get Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance you'll need to contact [Jobcentre Plus \(external link\)](#) if you've had a baby and/or a child under 5 has come to live with you. Otherwise, you won't automatically receive any Cold Weather Payments.
More information: <https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>
- **The Warm Home Discount scheme:** The Warm Home Discount scheme (WHDS) offers a one-off payment of £140 (inclusive of VAT) towards the energy bills of those who need it most. The scheme is managed by energy suppliers and is a one-off discount that is credited to the customer's energy account, prepayment card or key, during the winter. Contact your supplier to find out.
More information: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/738656/fuel_bills
- **Scottish Government's Child Winter Heating Assistance:** The Child Winter Heating Assistance is a £202 payment to help families of a child on the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance for Children to heat their homes. If the child or young person is eligible, you'll receive this payment automatically.
More information: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1626096/child_winter_heating_assistance/category/558/social_security_scotland
- **Inverness winter payments scheme 2021/22:** Eligible households living in one of the seven Inverness wards areas may be entitled to financial support during winter when extra fuel is needed to keep homes warm. The City of Inverness Area Committee winter payments scheme is designed to help people who are most in need and meets the eligibility criteria to apply for and claim the one-off winter payment of £88. This Scheme is fully funded by the Inverness Common Fund and is only available to eligible people within the Inverness Wards. You can download an application form for the Inverness Winter Payments Scheme for 2021/22. The scheme is open from 1 Dec 2021 – 28 Feb 2022,
More information: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/invernesswinterpayments>

- **MFR Mission Christmas (only available in the MFR coverage area.):** MFR Mission Christmas appeal has launched and will run in the same way as previous years. Individuals cannot apply themselves; they must be referred by a professional who is supporting them, such as a Social Worker, Health Visitor, School, Welfare Support Team, Citizens Advice Bureaux, or other charity. Mission Christmas aims to grant every child £50 to £60 worth of gifts.
More information:
<https://www.cashforkidsgive.co.uk/mission-christmas/highlands/>

For advice on any of the above, please contact the Welfare Support Team:
Telephone: 0800 090 1004 or email: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

Housing

Problems or Risk of Homelessness?

At risk of losing your home or having nowhere safe to stay? Contact Highland Council as soon as possible. We may be able to prevent a crisis. Phone us on 01349 886602. If our Housing offices are shut (at evenings, weekends or public holidays) call the Housing (Homeless) Out of Hours Service on 01349 886691 See our website to find out more: www.highland.gov.uk/housing

Highland Council Tenants – Emergency Repairs

We know that some tenant repairs can't wait until our housing offices are open again. In case of an emergency, Highland Council tenants should call the Housing Out of Hours Service on 01349 886691. We only act where there is a serious risk to health and safety or where there is potential for serious damage to one of our properties. See our website to find out more: www.highland.gov.uk/housing

Covid-19 scams

COVID-19 related scams mostly relate to contact tracing, online shopping, crisis grants, vaccinations, vaccination passports and letters about fake coronavirus rules and regulations and are being sent to residents and businesses.

For information, guidance and advice on Covid-19 related scams and a wide range of other scams, visit the Council website https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20000/trading_standards/900/covid-19_issues/2 or [Trading Standards Scotland website https://www.tsscot.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-scams/](https://www.tsscot.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-scams/).

Electricity and Gas supplies and support

Electricity: Who to contact in a power cut?

Call **105** free. You will be connected to your local electricity network operator's emergency line.

Gas: who to contact if you smell gas?

Call the free National Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111 999**.

OfCom guidance on [identifying the supplier](#) of your gas or electricity.

The network operator oversees the pipes and wires providing your energy, whereas the supplier provides the actual gas or electricity service.

Should you run out of credit on pay as you go meters, you can use emergency credit. For how to access information on Pay As You Go (PAYG) meters, click on the links below for information depending upon your providers:

- [SSE](#)
- [Scottish Power](#)
- [E.On](#)
- [EDF](#)
- [nPower](#)
- [British Gas](#)

Footpath clearing – support for communities

The Council's Winter Resilience Programme offers help to communities who want to take action in their own areas to help clear snow and ice from footpaths.

We recognise that some communities may themselves be able to treat a more extensive path network. The scheme needs co-ordination between the local community and their Community Council to allow for provision of public liability and personal injury insurance.

The Council will provide grit, shovels and snow pushers, gloves and high visibility clothing, health and safety advice and insurance. The community must nominate a lead contact person, compile a list of volunteers, identify the paths it would like to treat and locations for salt storage and identify what equipment it needs and where it will be stored.

For further information:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/99/roads_information/7

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Winter can be difficult for many people and we would like to remind people of the importance of reaching out for help if this is needed over the festive period. Partner agencies in Highland have developed a resource which signposts individuals and communities to trusted sources of support for mental health and wellbeing including where to get help in a crisis; resources/weblinks to support our mental wellbeing; and learning tools to build skills and confidence in conversations about mental health and suicide prevention.

For more information

https://www.highlandcpp.org.uk/uploads/9/5/2/0/95206114/hcpp_mental_health_and_wellbeing_resource.pdf

There are a number of befriending organisations in Highland, these can be found by searching on the Befriending Network UK Directory <https://www.befriending.co.uk/directory/>.

Domestic Abuse

Christmas should be a peaceful and happy time, but we know that it can be inherently difficult for victims and children because perpetrators of domestic abuse are at home more, there can be financial and social pressures, and particularly during the pandemic, victims can be more isolated from friends and family.

There are confidential services across Highland which work together and are available to support women and children and provide a safe space for survivors.

You can find information on where to get support here

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1400/domestic_violence/235/domestic_abuse

Concerned about Someone?

Should you be concerned about a vulnerable adult, whether for care, welfare or mental health reasons, you can contact the following numbers:

- Adult Protection Concern helpline – 0800 902 0042 in office hours and out of office hours or during holiday periods – 0845 769 7284.

Should you be concerned about a child, their welfare, wellbeing or their safety, then please use the following contacts:

- Child protection - phone the Police on 999 if a child is at immediate risk of harm.
- General advice or concerns, local numbers for each area can be found at <http://hcpc.scot/professionals> for local contact numbers or the Emergency out of hours service can be contacted on 08457 697284.

Quick guide

Handy numbers in the event of an emergency

In an emergency dial 999 for the police, fire and ambulance service.

Non-emergencies, you can contact the police on 101 and the fire service on 01382 835804.

Council emergency and out of hours phone numbers

Health and social care - 08457 697284

Roads, parks, flooding and street lighting - 01349 886690

Housing, homelessness, and public buildings – 01349 886691

Registration - 07818 588 203

Other useful Council Numbers

Highland Council Covid-19 Free Helpline 0300 303 1362

Welfare helpline – 0800 090 1004

Trunk road maintenance

BEAR Scotland - 0800 587 1107

Other numbers

Gas Freephone - 0800 111 999

NHS 24 - Call free on 111 if you are ill and it can't wait until your regular NHS service reopens

Police Scotland – 101 (for all services)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - 01463 240999 (24 hours)

Scottish and Southern Electric Freephone - 0800 300 999

Scottish Water - 0800 0778 778 (24 hours)

SEPA Floodline - 0345 988 1188

SEPA Pollution hotline – 0800 807060 (24 hours)

Samaritans - 116 123 (calls are free and do not show on a phone bill)

Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87

Highland Council Coronavirus Helpline

Tel: 0300 303 1362