

## 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>.

#### 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](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 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>

- **Scottish Government's Winter Heating Payment:** Winter Heating Payment is to help people on low-income benefits who might have extra heating needs during the winter period. Social Security Scotland pays this to people living in Scotland. It replaces the Cold Weather Payment from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and has the same eligibility requirements. It's a yearly payment of £50 that's paid automatically. Payments for winter 2022 are expected to be made from February 2023. A letter from Social Security Scotland will be sent to those who are eligible before they make the payment.

More Information: [Winter Heating Payment - mygov.scot](#)

- **The Warm Home Discount scheme:** The Warm Home Discount scheme (WHDS) offers a one-off payment of £150 (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.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>
- **Scottish Government's Child Winter Heating Assistance:** The Child Winter Heating Assistance is a 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, the household will receive this payment automatically.  
More information: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory\\_record/1626096/child\\_winter\\_heating\\_assistance/category/558/social\\_security\\_scotland](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1626096/child_winter_heating_assistance/category/558/social_security_scotland)
- **Inverness winter payments scheme 2022/23:** Eligible households living in one of the seven Inverness wards areas may be entitled to a one of £150 payment 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. This Scheme is fully funded by the Inverness Common Fund and is only available to eligible people within the Inverness Wards. The scheme is open from 1 Dec 2022 – 28 Feb 2023 inclusive.
- 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/>

## Welfare Support Team

Our aim is to put more money in your pocket so that you can pay your bills, heat your home and have a better quality of life.

We can:

- Advise you about all the benefits and other entitlements that are available
- Undertake benefit checks to ensure you are not missing out on any benefits
- Provide assistance to help you complete the relevant forms
- Help you with advice and support if your application for benefit is turned down or you do not receive the amount you were expecting

Watch our YouTube video [https://youtu.be/b\\_Uun2B32qk](https://youtu.be/b_Uun2B32qk)

The Welfare Support Team provide free, impartial and confidential support to claim all benefits and entitlements. Contact the Welfare Support Team by

- telephone: **0800 090 1004** or
- email: [welfare.support@highland.gov.uk](mailto:welfare.support@highland.gov.uk)

## Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureau offer free, impartial and confidential advice to the general public. They deliver support and guidance on a range of topics including welfare, money and housing advice, giving people the information, they need to deal with any situation and improve their lives.

- Find your local CAB: [www.cas.org.uk/bureaux](http://www.cas.org.uk/bureaux) or
- telephone: **0800 028 1456**

## 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](http://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](http://www.highland.gov.uk/housing)

## 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/107/winter\\_road\\_maintenance/3](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/107/winter_road_maintenance/3)

## **Third Sector Winter Resilience Services in Highland**

This document details the services who responded to a winter preparedness survey circulated in November 2022; and while it is not intended to record the full spectrum of third sector provision, it helps to identify those services who are actively supporting winter support.

<https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/>

## **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.

Download the Signposting to Mental Health and Wellbeing Resource for more information and support options

<https://www.highlandcpp.org.uk/uploads/9/5/2/0/95206114/signposting-to-mental-health-a4.pdf>

## **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, there can be financial and social pressures, victims can be 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](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.



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

Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87

