



TOWER HAMLETS

# Keeping well in winter

How we can all beat the winter blues, look out  
for each other and stay warm and well



**Lots of us say we're okay, but actually, we're worried about lots of different things. And who wouldn't be with so much going on?**

안녕

Привет

Hola

こんにちは

Hallo



We'd like you to take away five things from this booklet:

1. Be kind to yourself
2. Share the support available in this booklet with friends, neighbours, and family members
3. Ask for help when you need it - there is support out there
4. Know when, where and why to get your flu, Covid-19 and booster jabs
5. Put the kettle on and message or call a friend. It will be appreciated more than you know.



# Support with keeping you and your home warm

Many of us are worried about the increase costs of our bills, fuel and food this winter. There are little things we can all do at home to help minimise costs, and there is also support available.



If you urgently  
need help  
or advice on  
money, call  
**0800 138 777**

### Local schemes

One-off cost of living relief grants worth £100 have been made available by Tower Hamlets Council. These payments are available for households who are eligible for free school meals, or households deemed at risk of poverty.

Some residents on pension credit and households which receive Healthy Start Vouchers will also receive these grants. Eligible households will be contacted by the council or through their children's school.

### National schemes

Citizens Advice offers £49 fuel vouchers if you are struggling to pay your energy bills. This is available to people with a pre-payment meter after an assessment. Call **0203 8555 4472** to make an enquiry.

### Warm Home Discount Scheme

This scheme means you could get £140 as a one-off discount on your electricity bill for winter 2022-2023. You could qualify if you receive the guarantee credit element of the Pension Credit scheme, or if you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria. Contact your supplier to find out their eligibility criteria.

# Top tips to help you save money and stay warm

**Heat yourself, not your home** by layering thin clothes and using blankets, heat pads and hot water bottles.



**Turn off appliances like laptops and TVs** rather than leaving them on standby – this could save £30 each year.



**Eat regularly and have at least one hot meal a day** as well as lots of hot drinks.



**Turning off lights when you're not using them** can save £14 on energy bills every year.

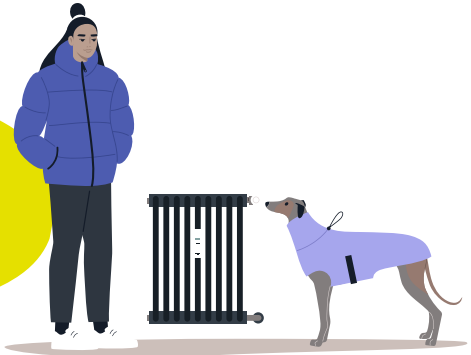
**Turn off your tap when brushing your teeth or washing your face** - a running tap can waste six litres of water a minute.





**Installing a water-efficient shower head** can save a household of four £70 on gas bills and £115 on water bills.

**Putting radiator reflectors or kitchen foil** behind your radiators reflects heat into the room



**Filling up the kettle only as much as you need**, using a bowl to wash the dishes and reducing your washing machine use by once a week can save £36 each year.

For more tips on staying warm or food support visit:  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/costofliving)

Further information and support can be found at:  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/winter](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/winter)

# It's good to talk



It's more important than ever for us all to take care of ourselves.

If you're feeling anxious or worried about the winter months, you're not alone.

## **Do you want to be there for friends, neighbours or people in your community but aren't sure what to say?**

It can feel tricky opening up conversations about money or mental health, but showing you care can make a big difference. The most important thing you can do is to listen, you don't need to be an expert in the topic! Some of these conversation starters may seem obvious, but they provide an opportunity for people to ask for help if they need it.



# Conversation starters

## 1. How are you?

People sometimes feel they need to say they're fine because that's what you want to hear, so it might be worth double checking to show you're genuinely interested in how they're feeling by asking "how are you really?"

## 2. You seem sad/ stressed – is everything ok?

This shows that you care and have noticed that something isn't quite right. It's an invitation for anyone to tell you that they might not be ok.

## 3. How can I help?

There may be small things you can do to ease the pressures or stresses that someone is feeling. Being there to share the load can make a real difference while also demonstrating that you are there for them and that support is available if they need it.

If you ever feel worried or concerned about a friend or family member, have a look at some of the support outlined earlier in this booklet, or visit the website for Mind in Tower Hamlets and Newham [www.mithn.org.uk](http://www.mithn.org.uk)



# Active Listening

Once someone starts to share how they're feeling, it's important to listen. This could mean not offering advice, not trying to identify what they're going through with your own experiences and not trying to solve their problems.

Here are some easy ways to make your communication more effective and make the other person feel more valued.

## Show you care

- Focus on the other person, make eye contact, put away your phone.
- To really listen to somebody, you need to give them your full attention, maintain eye contact and be engaged.
- When starting the conversation resolve not to talk about yourself at all.
- Aim to learn at least one new thing about the person who is talking to you.



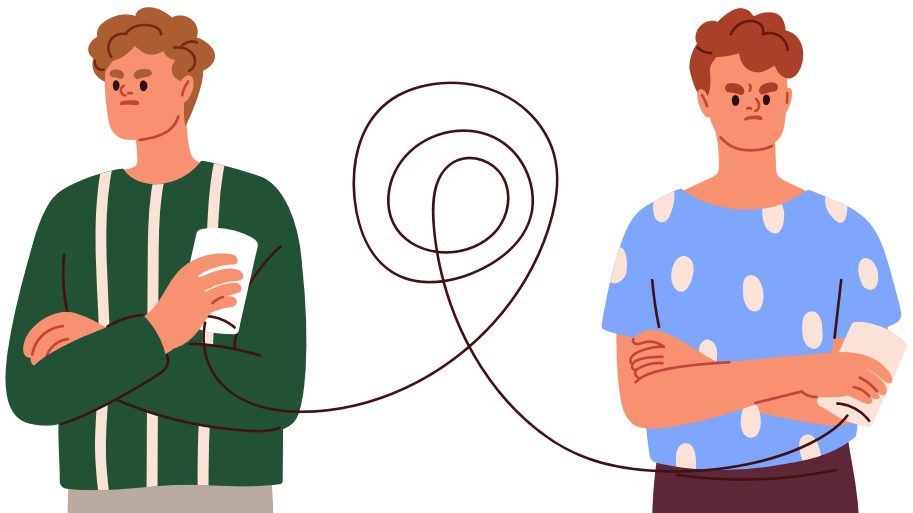
## Have patience

- It may take time and several attempts before a person is ready to open up.
- Effective listening is about creating trust with the other person. The person sharing shouldn't feel rushed or they won't feel it's a safe environment.
- If they've paused in their response, wait, as they may not have finished speaking. It might take them some time to formulate what they are saying, or they may find it difficult to articulate what they're feeling.



## Have courage

- Don't be put off by a negative response and, most importantly, don't feel you have to fill a silence.
- Sometimes it can feel intrusive and counter-intuitive to ask someone how they feel. You'll soon be able to tell if someone is uncomfortable and doesn't want to engage with you at that level.
- You'll be surprised at how willing people are to listen and how, sometimes, being able to share what is going on in their mind is exactly what someone needs.
- If you're worried someone is suicidal, it's okay to ask them directly. Research shows that this helps - because it gives them permission to tell you how they feel, and shows that they are not a burden.





## Say it back

- Check you've understood, but don't interrupt or offer a solution.
- Repeating something back to somebody is a really good way to reassure them that they have your undivided attention. And you can check to see that you're hearing what they want you to hear, not putting your own interpretation onto the conversation.

# Support

There are lots of local groups in Tower Hamlets where you can meet for a coffee, discover a new hobby or just go and have a chat. Find out more here: [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/loneliness](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/loneliness)

There's a range of different NHS services that can help depending on how you're thinking or feeling. Whether you've got something on your mind, or everything just seems a bit much, speak to your GP about how you're feeling – they can connect you to the right support.

You can also find further details of local services available on our website: [www.towerhamletsconnect.org/information-and-advice/wellbeing-and-mental-health](http://www.towerhamletsconnect.org/information-and-advice/wellbeing-and-mental-health)

**If you ever feel in a crisis, or are fearful for your own or someone else's safety, please call the Tower Hamlets emergency mental health crisis line, available 24/7 on 0800 073 0003.**

**Do you have an idea to help others this winter?**

If so you can apply for a grant of up to £5,000 to help bring people together in your area:

[www.eaastendcf.org/tower-hamlets-grants](http://www.eaastendcf.org/tower-hamlets-grants)



**Samaritans** is a confidential support service for anyone experiencing distress or despair. Call 116 123 for free.

**Shout** is a free, 24/7 confidential and anonymous service, with trained volunteers to listen and provide support. You can text the word 'SHOUT' for free to 85258 if you're feeling low, anxious, overwhelmed or not quite feeling yourself.

### **Movement is good for your mind and body**

During winter, it can feel easier to stay inside and out of the cold than going outside.

However, just being outside and out of the house can help make you feel better. Take advantage of a dry day and wrap up warm and go outside.

You could go for a walk with a neighbour, colleague or friend, or how about a cycle ride?



# Are you due your flu jab or next Covid-19 vaccine?

## **This year, the flu vaccine is being offered to:**

- All children aged two and three years by the end of August 2022
- All primary school aged children and some secondary school aged children
- Adults who are older or have certain health conditions, and frontline or social care workers.

The full list of people who are eligible can be found at:

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/vaccines](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/vaccines)

## **Where can I get my flu vaccine?**

- Children will be able to get vaccinated at school by a nasal spray if given permission from their parent or carer
- Adults can get their vaccine at your GP by giving them a call or booking through their online system



Alternatively you can scan this QR code to find your nearest pharmacy.

If you're not eligible for a free flu vaccine, you can still protect yourself from flu by getting a vaccine from a pharmacy or some larger supermarkets offering the vaccine for between £10-£18



# Are you eligible for the latest Covid-19 booster jab?

Respiratory illnesses like colds, flu and Covid-19 usually increase in winter because we spend more time inside with doors and windows closed. This allows viruses to pass more easily from one person to another.

Protection from vaccines can decrease over time. Getting your Covid-19 booster gives your immune system the top-up it needs so you can continue to have the best protection from the virus and help stop the virus from spreading.

## **The latest Covid-19 booster is being offered to:**

- Residents and staff working in care homes for older adults
- Frontline health and social care workers
- All adults aged 50 and over
- People aged 5 to 49 in a clinical risk group
- People aged 5 to 49 who live with people who are immunosuppressed
- People aged 16 to 49 who are carers.

If you are eligible, you should have been invited for your booster between September and December. You may also be able to have your Covid-19 booster and flu jab at the same time, just ask before you go. If you still need your first or second dose you can get that too!

Book or walk-in to a vaccine clinic, local pharmacy or visit our roaming vaccine bus, see [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/vaccines](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/vaccines) for times and locations.

# Do you dance in the kitchen? That counts as exercise!

Any form of movement, no matter how much, can help you feel good.

Whether it's walking to the shop or chasing after the children, getting your body moving releases chemicals which can help you feel better in yourself.



## Tips to keep warm and active:

- Simple chores at home such as hoovering or mowing the lawn count as moderate exercise
- Walk or cycle to your destination or get off the bus one or two stops early
- Get moving with a free range of classes and activities led by professionals. Find your local outdoor gym, as well as upcoming events and classes to get you started:

<https://bit.ly/TGOTowerHamlets>

## Try this:

It's good to try and see daylight each day. But with shorter days and longer nights, it's not as easy as it sounds. Give yourself a daily challenge to catch some light each day and, if possible, get outside for some fresh air – even if it's just for a few minutes.

We have a range of activities across our leisure centres and outdoor gyms for the over 50s and disabled people, with women-only classes and much more. Visit: [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/sport](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/sport)

# What should I do if I don't feel well?

Knowing when and how to contact the NHS means you can get the right help at the right time, while making sure to keep urgent care available for those who need it most.

## Pharmacy

- Minor illnesses that don't need a prescription, like coughs, colds, aches and pains
- Medication checks
- Health advice

## GP

- If you feel more seriously unwell
- You need prescribed medication
- Call or use your GPs online form about your symptoms

## Call 111, or visit: [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

- If you need medical help fast but it's not a life-threatening emergency
- Available 24 hours, 7 days a week
- Help with symptoms, health information and advice

## Call 999

- Call if someone's life is at risk and it's a medical emergency like a loss of consciousness, chest pain, breathing difficulties or severe bleeding
- Call immediately if you think you or someone else is having a heart attack or stroke

# Winter Wellbeing challenge

There are small things we can all do each day to help us feel positive, more energised and connected to ourselves.

Try our winter wellbeing challenge for 12 days and see how it makes you feel!

**Day 1** – pop the kettle on and march on the spot until it's boiled



**Day 2** – put your music on and dance to your favourite track



**Day 3** – message a friend, neighbour or family member



**Day 4** – take at least 15 minutes out to read, write or draw



**Day 5** – make your favourite hot meal





**Day 6** – write down three things for which you are grateful

**Day 7** – breathe deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth for 60 seconds



**Day 8** – do a big stretch when you wake up in the morning



**Day 9** – drink six glasses of water throughout the day

**Day 10** – Volunteer your time or money to a local charity or food bank



**Day 11** – Take a walk in your local park



**Day 12** – Relax in a warm bubble bath



# Helpful contacts

## Mind in Tower Hamlets

A community mental health charity that provides advice and support to anyone with a mental health or emotional issue. They also provide free counselling for Tower Hamlets residents.

Contact: **020 7510 4247/4248** or email **info@mithn.org.uk**

## Help with homelessness

The council works with a range of partners including homelessness charities, specialist substance misuse and mental health organisations and community groups to ensure rough sleepers are provided with appropriate support and an offer of a route off the streets.

If you are rough sleeping or are aware of somebody rough sleeping, visit: **www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/homelessness**

## Benefits

There are a range of benefits you may be entitled to including council tax reduction, pension credit or cost of living grants. Find out more at: **www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/costofliving**

## Volunteering

Join thousands of local people already volunteering by registering at **www.vcth.org.uk**

If you need help finding the right volunteering role, or have questions, call **07595 219 603** or email **info@vcth.org.uk**. Lines are open Monday to Thursday.

## **Warm Hubs**

Our Idea Stores, libraries and other community spaces will be hosting warm hubs for residents wanting a safe space to keep warm.

Refreshments including hot drinks, squash and biscuits will be available and staff will be on hand to signpost people to advice and support services.

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/warmhubs](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/warmhubs)

## **FOOD Stores**

The council has set up a number of FOOD Stores to support people who cannot afford enough food for themselves or their families.

FOOD Stores are places you can go to pick up £25-£35 worth of food in exchange for a £3.50 membership fee. At the same time, you will be supported in other areas that you might need help with. This includes help with issues around

- housing
- benefits access
- employment and more

To find out more or to become a member email [thefoodstore@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:thefoodstore@towerhamlets.gov.uk) with your name, address, postcode, date of birth and contact number.



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few minutes to  
provide feedback  
on this booklet**

