

# Winter Well Guide for Carers

*4 stages to staying well this winter*

## Prepare



## Staying Connected



## Self-Care



## Top Tips



## Prepare



### Carers Assessment

A carer's assessment is an opportunity for you to speak to someone about your caring role and the impact it has on your life. It is not a test to see how well you are caring, but a conversation to identify what support may assist you to maintain your own health and wellbeing.

It will consider the impact providing necessary care and support has on you and includes important aspects such as:

- ◆ Whether you're able and willing to carry on caring
- ◆ Whether you're currently working or want to work in future
- ◆ Whether you want to study or socialise more
- ◆ What can you do to remain well

Read more on Carer Assessments and what to expect by clicking [here](#)  
To book a carer assessment please phone First Point of Contact on 0345 678 9044

### Making your GP aware that you are a carer

Does your GP know you are a carer?

By letting your GP know about your caring role a carer flag can be placed on your notes which gives you access to further vaccinations and support.

Read more about the benefits of advising your GP practice [here](#)

### Emergency/Contingency Planning

Have you ever worried about what would happen if you suddenly could not be there for the person you support and care for?

It is important for all carers to make contingency plans with the person they care for to use in circumstances where help from other people to deliver care may be required. Depending on the circumstances, this could be from family or friends or a care provider.

A good, well thought out emergency plan will give you and the person you care for peace of mind, knowing that back up support can be put in place in case you need it. Creating an emergency plan that includes key aspects of your friend or family member's health and care can make it easier for other people to step in if you're not able to care for them.

Read more on emergency plans and for a link to an emergency plan template [here](#)

## Flu Vaccine and Covid Booster

### Flu vaccine

In a bad year the flu virus kills about 25,000 people in the UK and hospitalises many more. As a carer if you catch flu you may become too ill to leave home and it may make it impossible for you to continue to care for the person you are supporting.

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine which is offered as a protection to people who are at risk of getting seriously ill from flu.

Getting the flu vaccination is especially important this year as, due to the Covid 19 pandemic and lockdown, more people are likely to get flu as fewer people will have built up natural immunity.

If you receive carers allowance or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you are ill, you are eligible for a free vaccine from the NHS. The flu vaccine is available at GP practices and pharmacies.

Read more on flu vaccinations and how to book [here](#)

Find a local pharmacy that offers the flu vaccine [here](#)



### Covid 19 booster

The NHS have started to deliver the Covid 19 booster to people in eligible groups in the same order as the first vaccinations. Some people may be eligible for both the flu and Covid booster and may be able to arrange to have them at the same time.

Appointments for a Covid 19 booster dose can only be booked if it's been at least 6 months or a minimum of 182 days since the second dose of the vaccine.

To book a Covid 19 booster you can:

Attend a walk-in clinic - letter, text, email from NHS not required. For details of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin walk-in clinics please visit [COVID-19 Vaccination Walk-in and Pop-up Clinics \(stwics.org.uk\)](https://www.stwics.org.uk)

Book appointment via [National Booking Service](#)

Or by calling NHS 119

If you prefer to be vaccinated at your GP surgery, please wait to be contacted.

## Reminder Keeping safe with Covid 19

hands – face – space – fresh air



## Have you the right equipment?

The right equipment doesn't have to mean the gadgets and aids we normally think of when we need some support around the home to maximise our independence such as walking frames and stair rails. It can be Assistive Technology equipment, such as Alexa, one cup kettles and ring doorbell, all of which can be purchased locally from mainstream shops.

Shropshire Council offers a range of assistive technology from:

- ◆ Standalone Assistive Technology - designed to support individuals without the need for connection via a telephone line, from specialised bath plugs to equipment that lets carers see, hear and listen to a person in another room.
- ◆ Telecare service - telecare uses telephone wires and wireless sensors to link up the home to a call centre which is automatically alerted if, for example has a fall or if the oven is left on. It can be a simple falls alarm to memory reminders.

To find out if you are eligible for equipment and adaptations, please call Shropshire Council's first point of contact on 0345 678 9044 to request an occupational therapy assessment. The assessment will identify your needs and advise you on what may help you to maintain your independence within your home.

Read more information on equipment and links to helpful sites on making life easier at home [here](#)

## Be aware of the support available

Shropshire Carers is a dedicated carer support team within Shropshire Council, providing information, advice and support to carers over the age of 18 years old. Our vision is to enable carers to live their best lives by providing timely and quality information and support.

The service offers carers:

- ◆ 1:1 support -we work with you to explore the options available to you as a carer
- ◆ Information and advice – personalised for you. Information line operating Mon-Fri – 9am till 5pm
- ◆ Signposting or referral to specialist advice and support – e.g., benefits advice, advocacy
- ◆ Regular check in and chats to check on your wellbeing
- ◆ Assistance with planning ahead
- ◆ Peer support groups – virtual and in the community

Contact Shropshire Carers by phone – 01743 341995 or email:  
[Shropshire.Carers@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Shropshire.Carers@shropshire.gov.uk)

## Shropshire Carers - Carer Register

A way that you can keep up to date with what's going on, both locally and nationally. The Carer Register is a means of sharing important information quickly to you by whichever method suits you best i.e., text or email or letter. With enrolment to the register, you will also receive a carer ID/emergency card, emergency plan template and free five-part email course delivered by Mobilise online support for carers. Carers can de-register at any time by notifying Shropshire Carers.

Read more about the Register and how to join [here](#)

## Mobilise Shropshire

Online support for carers in Shropshire. Mobilise is available on dial up speeds and can be accessed via tablets, mobile phones as well as laptops and computers.

Mobilise offers information, tools to check eligibility for carers allowance and blue badges, weekly emails on key local and national updates, facilitated Face book, where carers can support each other, email course, 1:1 support call, coaching programme, website live chat and virtual cuppas.

Take a look at [Mobilise Shropshire](#) and see how they may help you.

## Shropshire Choices

First stop shop for information on a wide variety of health and social care support. Residents can access services from Shropshire Council, NHS partners and voluntary and community groups.

Read more about what you can find on Shropshire Choices [here](#).

## Keeping warm this winter

Cold temperatures can place a physiological stress on bodies. Some people are more at risk from the effects of cold weather, especially those over 65 years old, those with long term health conditions or a disability.

Please see information below on help available to ensure you can keep your home warm, at the recommended 18C this winter.

- ◆ Community Resource [Oil Buying Club](#) – join the club and make savings on your heating oil bills
- ◆ [Warmer Home Shropshire](#) – an initiative managed by Shropshire Council to fund first time central heating installation. Read information and how to apply [here](#)
- ◆ Keep Shropshire Warm - energy saving advice - Shropshire Councils free and impartial Keep Shropshire Warm Service can currently help residents access a range of energy efficiency grants. Read further information and how to apply [here](#)
- ◆ More information can be found at Shropshire Larder, [Support to keep your home warm and comfortable](#)

## What happens if your energy provider goes bust

Increases to prices in energy has put the energy providers market under pressure and, combined with an increase in demand this winter, may result in some energy providers going bust.

If your energy provider collapses, you will continue to receive gas and electricity. Ofgem will move your account to a new supplier, but you may not be able to negotiate the same price that you paid prior to the collapse of your energy provider.

Read more about steps that can be taken if your energy provider collapses [here](#)

Further reading - Martin Lewis, [Money Saving Expert](#) helping us to understand the choices open to us.

## Finance

If you are struggling to make ends meet there is advice available to you.

Read [Worrying about Money](#) to find out more about some options that may be available to you.

- ◆ Shropshire Council Local Support and Prevention fund helps vulnerable people who are facing crisis or who may need to stay independent in the community. It is there to support short-term immediate needs – it is not a cash scheme; cash would only be given if there was no other way of meeting need. Read information on eligibility and how to apply [here](#)
- ◆ Shropshire Council Advice, Advocacy and Welfare Benefits service. Four local free, independent, confidential and impartial registered charities are working together to deliver this service in Shropshire. Read details of the charities, the support they provide and how to contact them [here](#)
- ◆ [Shropshire Larder](#) provides a wide range of information and advice on maximising income, budgeting and debts and household bills.

## Staying Connected



### Informational Support

As a carer it can be difficult to know where to find information that is current and, importantly, correct. Perhaps you are new to caring and don't know which way to turn. Whatever the reason here are some ways that you can keep yourself informed.

Shropshire Carer Support team – friendly support practitioners who can provide information, personalised for you. Just contact our information line to find out how we can help. Tel: 01743 341995 Mon – Fri 9.00am till 5.00pm or email: [Shropshire.Carers@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Shropshire.Carers@shropshire.gov.uk)

Shropshire Carers Register is a way that you can keep up to date with what's going on, both locally and nationally. The Carer Register is a means of sharing important Information quickly to you by whichever method suits you best i.e., text or email or letter. With enrolment to the register, you will also receive a carer ID/emergency card, emergency plan template and free five-part email course delivered by Mobilise online support for carers. Carers can de-register at any time by notifying Shropshire Carers.

Read more about the Register and to join [here](#)

[Mobilise Shropshire](#) an online support for carers that offers information, tools to check eligibility for carers allowance and blue badges, weekly emails on key local and national updates, facilitated Face book, where carers can support each other, email course, 1:1 support call, coaching programme, website live chat and virtual cuppas.

[Shropshire Choices](#) - has a range of information on all aspects of health and social care plus a link to the Community Directory.

### Emotional Support

If you are feeling low this winter, please reach out and speak with someone.

Shropshire Carers Support team – we offer a listening ear. By talking through your situation, we can establish your needs and help you to reach solutions that assist you to move forward. Tel: 01743 341995 Mon-Fri 9.00am till 5.00pm

[Shropshire Mental Health Support](#) offers a wide range of support from groups, Calmer Café and telephone support.

[Mobilise Shropshire](#) If you are feeling really low [We offer free calls](#) with our carer support team. A friendly ear, the opportunity to get clarity around muddled thoughts, or simply just to connect.

[SHOUT](#) - You don't need to hide behind a smile.... you can talk with SHOUT over text 24/7, it's a free service available to everyone in the UK and it won't show up on your phone bills. And when you text there's a trained volunteer at the other end to talk with you – silently, by text message – until you feel calmer. Why not look at SHOUT's [Little Book of Coping Skills](#) a booklet with plenty of tips and techniques you can try to help you feel calmer and you can refer to it at anytime

**Samaritans** – if you need someone to talk to, Samaritans listen, without judgement and without telling you what to do. Call 116 123 for free, anytime of the day or night, 365 days a year.

**Samaritans Self-help App** - keep track of how you're feeling and get recommendations for things you can do to help yourself cope, feel better and stay safe in a crisis.

## Tangible Support

Shropshire offers a wide range of support to help you through the winter months. Please see information below on the support available.

Shropshire Carers Support Service – our dedicated team is here to support you offering help and advice. Our support line is available from Monday to Friday 9am-5pm Tel: 01743 341995 or you can email us at [shropshire.carers@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:shropshire.carers@shropshire.gov.uk).

**Shropshire Choices Support Finder** - a directory which gives you information on finding a care facility/paying for care/carer services/staying independent.

**Shropshire Community Directory** gives you information on where you can find help including benefits, groups, community transport, health and social care and housing.

**Mobilise Shropshire** is an online service for unpaid carers, which brings together the collective knowledge, wisdom and expertise of unpaid carers. Mobilise offers a range of information and opportunities to join their facilitated Face book, where carers can support each other, Virtual cuppas, 1:1 support via a phone call and website live chat.

**Winter Support Service**—will offer assessment and ongoing support to people identified as needing help, including

- ◆ Shopping and delivery
- ◆ Connecting people to local support groups
- ◆ Collecting and delivering medications
- ◆ Telephone companionship for isolated or lonely people
- ◆ Wellbeing home visits and follow-up support

This year, Shropshire Council is working with the Red Cross as well as the wider Wellbeing and Independence partnership to offer further support when someone is discharged from hospital.

Local residents and those who support people in the community can call the Winter Support Service helpline on **0345 678 9012** in order to find out more and be referred where appropriate. This phonenumber will be open Mondays-Fridays, 9am to 5pm.

## Self-Care



Providing care, while often rewarding, can also have a significant impact on health and for carers both mental and physical health can be affected. Self-care is important, it isn't being selfish – it is essential that carers take steps to look after themselves. This means deliberately doing activities to promote good mental, physical and emotional health.

What small actions can you incorporate into your daily routine to help you stay well this winter?

## Building Resilience

Resilience is our ability to adapt and bounce back when things don't go as planned so building your own resilience can help you to cope if a crisis presents itself.

The good news is that we can learn to develop a resilient mindset and attitude.

So, what can we do to build more resilience?

- ◆ Learn to relax – if you know a certain activity like taking a bath, listening to music or taking the dog for a walk helps you to feel more relaxed make sure you set some time aside to do it. [8 tips for relaxation](#)
- ◆ Develop a good sleep routine or rest when you can - [10 tips on getting a good night's sleep](#)
- ◆ Practice gratitude – noticing something you are grateful for improves how you feel. Keep a gratitude journal and make a note of all the good things each day that are often easily forgotten.
- ◆ Meditation - spend 10 minutes a day doing [guided meditation](#)
- ◆ Movement for your Mind - help you look after your wellbeing with simple movements <https://qube-oca.org.uk/movement-for-your-mind/>
- ◆ Be active – doing physical activity is important for our physical and mental health. Going for a regular walk outside may help you feel less stressed, perhaps a half hour walk in the morning to set you up for the day?
- ◆ Eat healthily – what you eat and when you eat can make a big difference to how you feel.
- ◆ Practice self-compassion. Learning to be kinder to yourself can help you to control how much pressure you feel and lower stress levels. Don't be hard on yourself if you don't do everything on the list.
- ◆ Distract yourself from the worry by doing a puzzle or playing a game. More things to do can be found at [Good Things to Do at Home](#)
- ◆ Stay connected with friends and family and develop a support network. Make that phone call you've been meaning to make now.
- ◆ Struggling to find the time to self-care? Read Mobilise Shropshire [How to care for yourself when there's no time to care for yourself](#)

## Keeping Physically Active

We all know that staying active is important to our health and well-being. It can feel harder to remain active throughout the winter months when it is cold and wet outside, and the days are shorter. Here are some ideas for ways to stay or get active over the winter months ahead.

### **Standing up – important for our health**

There is increasing evidence that, unless you are a wheelchair user, sitting down too much can be a risk to your health. To reduce our risk of ill health from inactivity, we are advised to exercise regularly and reduce sitting time.

The [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines report](#) recommends breaking up long periods of sitting time with activity for **just 1 to 2 minutes**.

***If you spend a lot of time at home in a chair, can you regularly get up and stand for a brief spell, walk round the room, swing your arms and do something that involves moving your body just for a few minutes?***

Many adults in the UK spend around 9 hours a day sitting. This includes watching TV, using a computer, reading, doing homework, travelling by car, bus or train but does not include sleeping.

If you are interested to find out more here are 2 links to further information and advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/why-sitting-too-much-is-bad-for-us/>

<https://www.healthyshropshire.co.uk/news-flash/get-britain-standing/>

Physical activity is vital for health whatever our age. Find information here on the benefits of physical activity, and how much activity you need to do. The link below also gives ideas for keeping active in your daily life, opportunities to join local exercise groups, sport or free activity.

<https://www.healthyshropshire.co.uk/topics/physical-activity>



### **Walking is one of the best ways of taking exercise and improving your health and fitness.**

Walking for health groups are available all over the county. They offer graded walks and there is something to suit nearly everyone, regardless of age or ability. They are a great way to enjoy being outdoors, meet new people, make friends and have fun!

Physical activity can help improve many medical conditions, but please check with your doctor first before attending a walk if you are not sure of the effects of activity on your condition

<http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/walking/walking-for-health/>

**Walk with me** – walking can be creative and fun as well as good exercise. you are invited to go for a walk outside, around your house and garden, or in your mind. You can document your walk in a variety of creative ways, or simply enjoy using your imagination by using the Walk with me guide.

Find your local walking for health [here](#)

One of the key benefits of walking is being outside in natural daylight throughout the winter months

Daylight is good for our physical and mental health and can improve our sleep patterns .

During the dark winter months

- ◆ Try to get as much natural light as possible – even a brief daily walk outside can be beneficial
- ◆ Make your work and home environments as light and airy as possible
- ◆ Stand or sit near windows during the day, as often as you can when you're indoors
- ◆ As far as you are able, take plenty of regular exercise particularly outdoors and in daylight

## Managing Your Mental Health



Bad weather, shorter days, lack of support, depressing news every time we switch the TV on...all contribute to lowering our mental and emotional wellbeing.

Keeping a mood diary is a mindful activity that can help us track what is making us feel better and what is bringing us down. When you see a pattern emerge you can take steps to avoid or prepare for situations which cause you anxiety.... conversely, it means you can do more of what makes you happy too.

It's helpful to get outside if we can, especially if the sun is shining, so that we soak up as much vitamin D as possible. When we can't get out, we can still enjoy some of the benefits of being outside by trying virtual forest bathing (an ancient Japanese process of relaxation). Being calm and quiet and observing nature whilst breathing deeply can help boost our health and wellbeing in a natural way. Research has shown that viewing images of the forest can still cause changes in the brain and body that makes us feel more relaxed.

Try some virtual [forest bathing](#) and see whether it improves your mood.

There are several online sites that can help us to improve our mental wellbeing.

[Togetherall](#) – a safe online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health.

[Shropshire Mental Health Support](#) offers a wide range of support from groups, Calmer Café and telephone support.

[Shropshire Council bereavement support.](#) A service to support Shropshire residents who are experiencing and suffering from bereavement and loss. The offer is open to anyone who has been bereaved by either a recent death or previous loss. The Bereavement Support Service is operated by Shropshire Council and community voluntary partners Samaritans, CRUSE, and Severn Hospice and CRANE counselling. If you or someone you know could benefit from this service, please call **0345 678 9028** for further information and access.

## Eating a Healthy Diet

Eating a balanced, nutritional diet is essential to keep your body strong and helps to maintain your physical and emotional wellbeing. When tired and stressed it can mean you eat less well, and this weakens your body and immune system.



A healthy diet can help to protect you from a range of health conditions including heart disease, Stroke, type II diabetes and some cancers. Good nutrition is important in aiding recovery following an illness or medical treatment when the body needs more energy

The link [8 tips for healthy eating \(NHS\)](#) gives practical tips on the basics of healthy eating

The link to [Healthy Eating](#) provides some ideas on how to plan, enjoy and stick to a healthy diet

The Eatwell guide is a good visual guide to healthy eating and the proportions of each food group to include in your diet. [Eatwell guide 2016 FINAL MAR23 \(bupa.co.uk\)](#)

A good community resource is the [Shropshire Larder](#) which gives details of Community Food Projects throughout Shropshire and handy tips on cooking on a budget.

It is important to keep up your fluid intake but avoid too much fluid before meals if you are struggling to eat. It is also worth looking at your medication as some can interfere with the body's ability to absorb nutrients if you are losing weight. There are several different reasons why appetite may be lacking, including ill-fitting dentures, poor oral health, problems with chewing, loss of taste and smell. You should consult your health care professional on any problems with your diet.

## Staying Connected

It is important to stay socially connected with friends, family and support mechanisms especially as winter draws near and the nights get longer.



Humans are naturally social creatures, and our lack of social interaction during the winter months can have a significant impact on our mental and physical health. Staying connected can help us stay healthy, reduce stress and improve our wellbeing. Covid 19 has meant that so much of our connection with others is now digital, over a phone, zoom or WhatsApp call. While this can't replace human contact it is a way that we can remain connected to other people and the wider world.



Being digitally confident can improve how we connect with family, friends and organisations who can support us.



If you would like more information or access to learning, short courses to support you are available to learn more about computer skills for all or just refresh your knowledge while building confidence.



[Shropshire Council Digital Skills](#) page gives details of different courses and sites to learn more and gain confidence in using the internet.

Try [Learn my Way](#) for courses on internet safety, online shopping and video calling.

[Get Safe online](#) gives information on how on stay safe online.

[Digital Skills for Shropshire Citizens](#) - Help to get online and use the internet safely for over 65's

## Importance of Play

It's important for us to include some fun in our lives. Play is not just for children. Researchers are finding that play for grown-ups can be an important means of reducing stress, stimulating creativity, improve connections with others, improve memory and maintain wellbeing.

Play is healthy and fun and there are many ways and different types of play e.g., adult colouring books can be very relaxing, playing fetch with your dog, going for a bike ride, doing some knitting. There doesn't need to be a point to the activity other than having fun and enjoying yourself.

When you do get a little bit of time maybe you could try suggesting a board game, or game of cards, or charades, or start an online quiz with friends instead of sitting in front of the TV.

[Good Things To Do at Home](#) – has some ideas of fun things you may like to try.

## Helpful Websites to stay well this winter

Age UK [Winter Wrapped up guide](#) - a guide to keeping warm and well this winter.

Shropshire Council, [Stay Safe and Well this Winter](#) - information and advice; latest weather alerts and local information during bad weather.

## Top Tips - be ready for Winter



Are you are ready for winter?

Use the helpful check list below and tick the boxes so you know you are.

	Check your boiler – does it need a service?
	Make sure stopcocks are easy to access and turn off in case of freezing weather and the risk of pipes bursting. It may need to be replaced if it has seized up.
	Keep a torch handy in case of power cuts – candles and blankets may be useful too.
	Keep simple cold/flu remedies at home – for coughs, sore throats and sniffles.
	Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged before leaving the house
	Have spare batteries ready - for your torch, hearing aids and remote control for the TV
	To avoid a slip or fall keep some salt handy to put on icy paths and steps
	Make sure you have enough of your repeat prescription medication and consider ordering a refill early if bad weather stops you getting out to collect it. Check if your pharmacy offers a prescription delivery service.
	For motorists – is your car winter ready? Check the anti-freeze and screen wash; check your tyres and carry a winter car kit that includes a torch; blanket, hi-visibility vest, scraper and de-icer. Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged before the journey.
	Have an emergency contact number sheet where it is visible so that you can phone immediately to get support. Download our template to complete your own emergency number list

# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

<b>Supplier/Company/Contact</b>	<b>Name &amp; Telephone Number</b>
<b>Gas supplier</b>	
<b>Electricity Supplier</b>	
<b>Water Supplier</b>	
<b>Plumber</b>	
<b>Local Pharmacy</b>	
<b>GP practice</b>	
<b>NHS 111</b>	
<b>First Point of Contact (Shropshire Council)</b>	