

**Covering top tips for staying well throughout the winter, including:**


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# WINTER 2026/27

## A parent and carer guide to:

# Winter Wellness for Teenagers

worcestershire.gov.uk

worcestershire county council

The winter holiday is a welcome break from the long autumn term and a time for your teenager(s) to switch off from school. This booklet contains some suggestions for supporting your teenager to stay safe and healthy through the holiday and into the colder winter months.

Support for parents and carers can be found **here** and additional support for parents of SEND teenagers can be found through **various groups** across the county.

If you need access to the internet to use the links, please visit your local library for support to do this.

## RELATIONSHIPS

The Winter holiday period often brings families together. This can be fun but also sometimes bring stress and conflict, especially if families are co-parenting or estranged. Be aware of the impact this may have on your teenagers, in particular foster children.

There is support available via the links.



**Harmony at Home**

**Falling out & making up free learning**
(Password: PARENTSROCK)

Support if you are experiencing domestic abuse:

**Women**

**Men**

Support to change your abusive behaviours towards partners or family members:

**Men & Masculinities**

# Mental Wellbeing

The Winter holiday can be a happy and exciting time but for some families there can be added stress. Supporting your teenager(s) through the expectations, excitement, pressures, comparisons and realities can sometimes be challenging. The hype and reality don't always match.

If you are concerned about your teenager's changes in mood and behaviour such as:

- Sleep difficulties
- Withdrawing socially
- Stopping activities they usually enjoy
- Neglecting themselves (poor hygiene or not eating) or self harm

You (or they can independently) seek help from various sources:

- School health nurse service:

**ChatHealth**
(for young people)

**Parentline**
(for parents/carers)

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS:

**Children, Young People and Families Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub**

You can find out more about how teenagers' brains develop and much more through this free online course:

**Togetherness**
(Password:PARENTSROCK)

To book onto a workshop about understanding your teenager's behaviour find courses via your Family Hubs here.

**Workshop groups run by Worcestershire Family Hubs**

Some people can feel low with fewer daylight hours at this time of year. Simple tips to help your teenager overcome this are:

- Get into the daylight early in the day
- Try to get out when the sun is shining
- Use any local green space for exercise such as a walk as this can help boost mood
- Sit near a window
- Do some physical activity to boost happy hormones

You can access more tips and advice on staying well and how to cope if you or your teenager is struggling or having suicidal thoughts **here**.

## Exams

If there are mock exams on the horizon, be prepared for supporting your child around exam stress. Support your teenager to:

- Find the right revision strategy that works for them.
- Start revision early as feeling prepared can reduced stress.
- Develop positive beliefs.

Visit YoungMinds to learn more about how you can support your child with exam stress:

**YoungMinds**

There are various services where your teenager can get confidential support (see **page 3, MentalWellbeing**)

## Money

Winter time invariably brings financial pressures. Setting realistic expectations can help to counter some of the pressures that you may feel to match gifts with those your teenager's friends may receive.

If you are struggling with balancing the budget the link below can help:

**Cost of Living Support**

If you think you may be a victim of a loan shark (someone who lends money illegally) contact Stop Loan Sharks to get support, you won't get into trouble.

**Stop Loan Sharks**



## Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) events

There are HAF events happening across the county where children who qualify for free school meals can access free activities and food through the holidays. There are often places for non-free school meal children too at a small cost.

**Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Worcestershire County Council**

## Food and nutrition

The winter holidays are often a time to meet with family and enjoy meals together. Try to include healthier seasonal foods as well as treats. Instead of loading up on sugary, salty, or fatty foods all at once, spread them out over a few days. Avoid giving your teenager(s) energy drinks and caffeine which can interfere with sleep.

In the winter months everyone in the UK needs extra **Vitamin D**. Encourage your teenager(s) to take 10ug (microgrammes) supplements each day from October until April. Foods high in vitamin D are: egg yolks, oily fish (including tinned), foods fortified with vitamin D like some spreads and breakfast cereals.

In the New Year it is best to aim for healthy well-balanced meals. Get some hints for healthier recipes **here**.

**Look after yourself too**



## Being active

Being active in the winter months has added benefits for teenagers such as exposure to daylight which can boost mood and if early in the day, aid sleep.

Being active can also burn off excess energy from high sugar and fat foods.

Encourage your teenager(s) to have an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous exercise a day (football, running, swimming, cycling, dancing) – they don't have to do it all in one go.

They should aim to do muscle and bone strengthening activity twice a week (gymnastics, martial arts, small sided team games e.g. 5-a-side football). Ensure any new activities are built up gradually.

Doing regular muscle and bone strengthening activities in the teenage years can make a big difference for your children's health into their old age.

**Activity Finder**
**Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire**

## Staying warm

Keeping your home warm can be a worry, especially when your children are at home all day in the holidays.

Warm Welcome Spaces are local places available over winter to provide a warm alternative to staying at home.

**Warm welcome spaces map**

Advice and financial support is available in Worcestershire to help you stay warm over winter and manage energy costs. The following link has more information.

**Act On Energy - Local Advice and Support**

Going out as a family during the day to free events can mean the heating can be turned off for a few hours.

Check out your local museums and other activities here:

**Family Fun & Support Worcestershire**



# Winter weather

When the colder weather is here you might want to chat with your teenager(s) about being safe around icy ponds and lakes, snow safety and being seen when out and about including when cycling.

## Ice

Frozen ponds and lakes can be very tempting to explore but icy ponds and lakes in the UK are unlikely to be safe to walk on.

**Water Safety Near Frozen Water Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK)**

When sledging, a helmet can prevent an accident becoming a tragedy. Check out trees, fences and scan for obstacles that may be hidden in the snow such as rocks.

Although reflective clothing and bands may not be trendy, they can make the difference between being seen or not, especially on dark rural roads. When cycling, the law requires **all cyclists** to use front and rear lights. Consider rechargeable lights as a present.

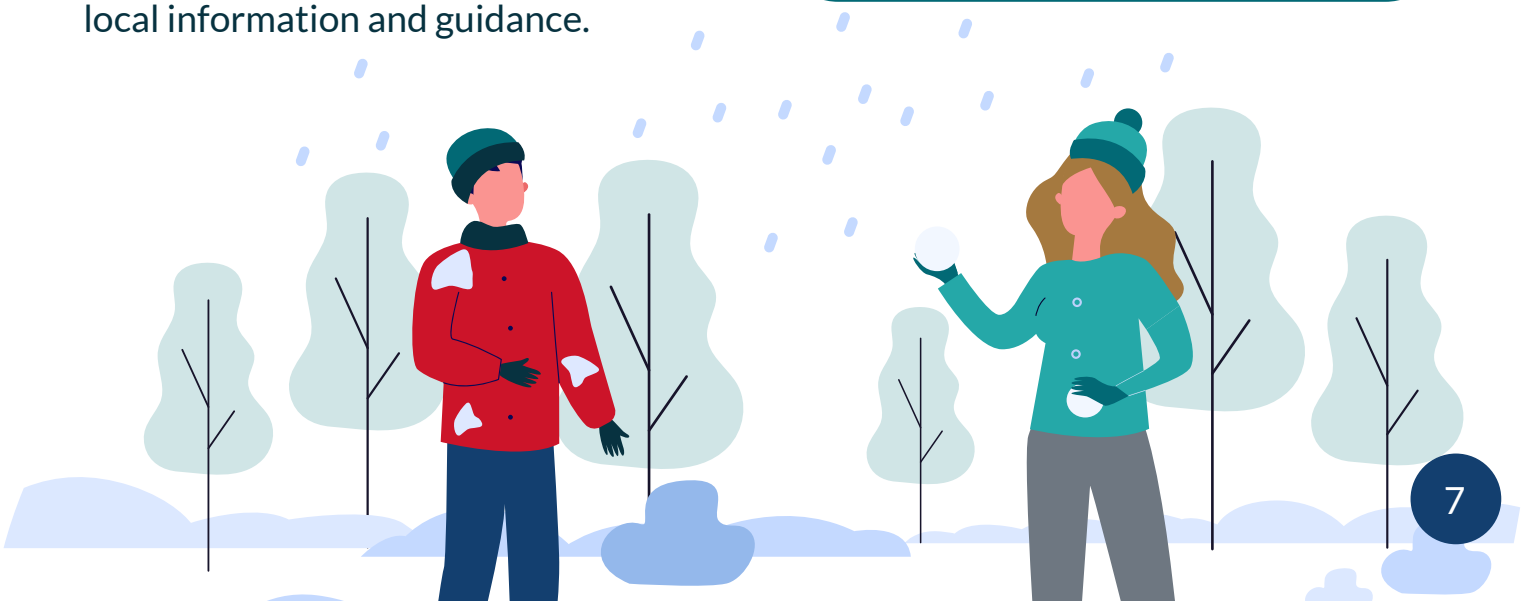
Encourage your teenager to wear a cycle helmet. They are more likely to do this if you wear one too.

# Be prepared

Preparing for winter emergencies includes having practical household supplies, checking in on local weather risks such as flooding and knowing how to access official help and support. Follow the Worcestershire Winters Well campaign to stay up to date with the local information and guidance.

**Worcestershire Winters Well**

**Preparing for emergencies**



## Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol consumption under the age of 16 can have negative effects on teenagers' brain development. At all ages it can reduce self-control and can increase risky behaviours which can cause accidents, arguments and unwanted sexual behaviours.

It is illegal for shops to sell alcohol to under 18's and also for adults to purchase alcohol for under 18-year-olds to consume (known as proxy purchasing).

If you are concerned about your teenager's use of alcohol or drugs, they can get free support from the Here4YOUth service

**Worcestershire Here4YOUth Cranstoun**

Learn more **here** so you can have open conversations about drugs and alcohol at home.

## Socialising

The winter holiday can create pressure for your teenager(s) to attend parties where, as a parent/carer, you might have less oversight about what happens and your teenager's experiences. Discuss the arrangements for keeping young people safe with the person organising the party.

Agree on how your child will get home safely and your expectations about alcohol, smoking, vaping and drug use.

Agree a word or phrase, that only you and your teenager know, that they can use to indicate they need your help.

Teenagers may also have concerns about not being invited to parties.

Although social media is a great way to stay in touch with friends it can start to take over some young people's lives. Encourage meeting friends in person and agree limits on screen time generally.



# Online Safety

You have an important role in modelling healthy digital habits to your teenager – **read this blog** to find out how.

Most teenagers communicate with friends online. However, online not everyone is who they seem to be, make sure your teenagers know this and how to report any suspicious or worrying activity or requests. Keep an open and relaxed dialogue with your children about their online presence and what information to keep private. Be aware that gaming platforms mean teenagers may be talking to people they don't know. Keep oversight of their social media accounts to minimise the risk of online grooming and bullying.

Find out more here:

**Keeping your child safe online Worcestershire County Council**

Report any concerns here:

**CEOP Safety Centre**

If you are concerned about your teenager's online gaming and gambling (e.g. for skins/loot boxes/mods) you can find more information and support options here:

**Find help Ygam**

Download the R;pple tool for free on home computers, laptops and phones. R;pple provides signposting and support in response to online searches related to self-harm and suicide.

**R;pple: Crisis Intervention Suicide Prevention & Mental Health**

If you have concerns about your teenager accessing websites that promote extremism, find out how to get support **here**.

You can also access interactive training packages here to understand current extremist threats, including modules on the manosphere and violence fixation.





## Infections

Some germs are more common in the winter months such as colds, flu, RSV and norovirus. One of the easiest and cheapest ways to avoid your family catching these is by **thorough handwashing and drying** and keeping up to date with vaccinations.

You can help prevent flu by opting for your child to have the flu nasal spray, this also helps prevent flu being transferred to more vulnerable members of your family such as grandparents.

**Flu, COVID-19 & Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Worcestershire County Council**

Find out more about children's vaccinations here:

**Immunisations & vaccinations Worcestershire County Council**

If your teenager is at university or is in Year 13, the **free NHS MenB vaccine** helps protect against a serious infection that can cause meningitis and sepsis. Make an appointment for their first dose to be administered before the end of December and the second by the end of March. This is especially important if they live or will live in shared accommodation. This important vaccination is only available free this year.

Find out about self-care for common winter illnesses or consult your pharmacist. Only take medications as directed and supervise your teenagers' access to common medications found in the home.

**Self care Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care System**

## Sleep

The winter holiday is usually only 2 weeks. Support your teenager to maintain a regular sleep pattern so getting up for school is not too difficult in January. Discuss how they can avoid using their phone into the early hours, talk about enjoying sleep.

Try agreeing a curfew with their friend's parents or using an App to place a curfew on their phone. Teenagers need 8 to 10 hours sleep each night. Encourage them to avoid napping during the day, especially after 6pm. Try this link for some advice:

**Parents & Carers Teen Sleep Hub**

## Quitting smoking & vaping

Very few teenagers smoke.
If your teenager (12-17) is smoking they can get specialist NHS support to quit by contacting the Smoke Free Homes service.

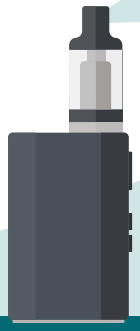
From 1st January 2027 anyone born in 2009 or later, so aged 17 or under, will not be able to purchase tobacco at any age, so support your young smoker to quit now.

**Smoke Free Homes Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust**

If you are using vapes to quit smoking avoid vaping in front of your children.

Cigarettes and vapes can make children's asthma symptoms worse, impact their mental wellbeing and sleep.

**Information and guidance on vaping**



## New Year resolutions

Use this as an opportunity to plan for positive changes and new experiences such as healthier eating, more exercise face to face activities and quality time with people important to you.

Being a parent or carer is hard work – set realistic goals. If you find it difficult to stick to a resolution, don't worry. You can make changes at any time of the year.



You can contact the School Health Nurse team at any time of year on the confidential ParentLine, text 07312 263547 or submit a referral here:

**Worcestershire School Health Nursing Service**

Find lots of information, support and resources for parents at the Virtual Family Hub and Family Hubs.

**Worcestershire Virtual Family Hub**