

Every life **matters**

Let's talk about it

Feeling
snowed
under?

Worrying
about
money?

A guide to
surviving Christmas

We all recognise that Christmas and New Year are times of great celebration providing people with an opportunity to come together, exchange gifts, share memories and show friends and family how important they are to us.

However, it is almost impossible to get through Christmas without experiencing some level of stress.

For many it can be a time that brings financial pressure, stress, loneliness and can remind us of sad times in our lives.

There are practical steps which you can take all year round to look after your own and others' mental health. Here are just a few:

- **Take time for relaxation**
- **Don't overindulge**
- **Fit in some time for exercise such as a gentle walk**
- **If you can, try to be around other people**

This booklet gives some handy hints and tips for surviving the festive season as well as useful information and phone numbers in case you need support.

Tips and hints for before the holiday

Collect phone numbers of the out of hours and emergency services that will be available (many are at the end of this booklet). Keep this near your phone, or somewhere you can find it easily.

Tips and hints for Christmas planning

- Plan out what you need to do over the festive season
- Use the booklet to talk things over with a few friends or family
- Make plans with services you are currently receiving such as health and social care workers, support workers or peer supporters

Managing your expectations to have more fun. Top tips to keep Christmas stress to a minimum

- Aim for "enjoyable" not "perfect". Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable. Don't try to make it perfect.
- Recognise that being together 24/7, may cause tensions, and allow for this.
- Minimise "are we nearly there yet?" issues when travelling. It is so disappointing to make travel plans in order to promote family togetherness only to get to the destination feeling stressed. Include pre-planned rest stops, drinks and snacks, music and audiobooks, and lots of activities for the kids in the back. Travel off-peak if possible.
- Find time for yourself. Don't spend all your time providing activities for your family and friends. If you're a parent, remember your own need to have fun, and aim for a balance of activities that meet everyone's needs.
- Planning and teamwork: Involve the family in plans and in the workload. Children can have some say, and parents' needs count as well.
- Don't try to do it all.

The Mental Health Foundation's tips to surviving Christmas

Drink sensibly

The celebratory spirit of Christmas and New Year often involves social drinking. Although consumption of alcohol might make you feel more relaxed, it is important to remember that alcohol is a depressant. Drinking excessive amounts can cause low mood, irritability or potentially aggressive behaviour.

By not exceeding the recommended number of safe units, you will be able to sustain good mental health and physical wellbeing.

Eat well

The festive period has become synonymous with over-indulgence, which in turn prompts a pressing desire for many of us to lose weight in the New Year. Therefore, where possible, it is important to maintain a good balance of fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates, protein and omega 3 sources throughout the year in order to help us work towards weight loss in a sensible way.

Maintaining a healthy diet and weight can improve your mood and can work towards preventing symptoms of lethargy and irritability that many of us feel during the busy festive season and dark winter months.

Be active

Exercise releases the feel-good chemicals, endorphins, which help you to relax, feel happy and boost your mood. By undertaking simple tasks such as cycling to work, walking in the park or joining in with Christmas games, you can benefit from experiencing reduced anxiety, decreased depression and improved self-esteem.

In addition, recent research has indicated that regular exercise can help boost our immune systems, enabling us to better fight off colds and flu viruses that are prolific in winter months.

Get involved

The festive period provides us with an ideal opportunity to talk to, visit or engage with the people around us. Face to face communication has been shown to improve our mental and physical wellbeing as this interaction produces the hormone, oxytocin, which can benefit our immune system, heart health and cognitive function.

Our **Lonely Society?** Report showed that a third of us have a close friend or family member we think is lonely. A Christmas or New Year's resolution to see our friends and family more often can help to boost both our own mental wellbeing and that of others.

If you are apart from your family then volunteering for a charity or local community organisation can provide that same human contact, as well as help provide essential support and encouragement for others in need. These interactions can easily be sustained throughout the coming year and need not just be for Christmas.

Relax

Christmas can be a very busy and stressful time as we prepare to entertain family and friends, worry about cooking a delicious Christmas dinner and fit in some last minute present shopping.

These feelings of being under pressure can produce symptoms of anxiety, anger and difficulty sleeping which, if prolonged, could have a long-term detrimental impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

By exercising more regularly or practicing mindfulness – a combination of meditation, yoga and breathing techniques – you can help to both alleviate the symptoms of your stress and gain more control when coping with difficult situations.

Christmas presents aside, implementing a new exercise regime or signing up for a course in mindfulness could be your best investment for a more relaxed Christmas and New Year.

Sleep

Despite many of us having time off work during Christmas and the New Year, our sleep patterns can be disturbed between catching up with friends and family and partying late into the night. There is mounting evidence on the link between sleep and mental wellbeing, meaning improvements in the quality of your sleep could result in improvements to your overall mental health.

There are several steps you can take towards achieving a better night's sleep: attempting to get back into your regular sleep routine as soon as possible after the party period, consuming less alcohol during the festivities, implementing regular exercise into your weekly routine and taking measures to alleviate your stress.

Access to health and social work services over the holidays

In Scotland most services will close for two public holidays at Christmas and New Year.

This year they will be closed on **Thursday 25 and Friday 26 December 2025**. They will reopen on Monday 29 December.

They will be closed again on **Thursday 1 and Friday 2 January 2026** and reopen again on **Monday 5 January 2026**.

Although there will be fewer staff in some of the services due to the holiday period, people who require support during this period will receive it through pre-planning.

For social work emergency services call **0303 123 1008**.

Remember to contact NHS24 on 111 if your GP surgery is closed for access to any health services.

Under emergency circumstances A and E and 999 services will work as normal.

To access information on health services over the festive period visit:

www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk

Or call the South Lanarkshire Infoline: 0330 3000 133

Tips and hints for during the holiday period

- Make sure you have enough medication to last you throughout the holiday period.
- For leisure services, check the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture website: www.slleisureandculture.co.uk

Staying safe during the festive season - Heading out

- Be prepared – ensure you have enough money for your day/night out and enough to get home if you plan on using public transport or a taxi
- Carry a mobile phone with credit in it if possible
- If you are drinking alcohol be careful, there is nothing wrong with having good time but beware of what is going on around you

Going home

- Try to arrange how you are getting home at the start of the night, either a lift, public transport or a taxi. If necessary, pre-book a taxi for later on
- If you are close enough to home to walk then take care. Try to stick to busy, lit areas and not quiet, isolated areas. Also watch for underfoot conditions
- Be careful with cigarettes in the home after a night out; ensure they are completely out before going to sleep
- When drinking alcohol on a night out always try to organise a way of getting home before you go out – never drink and drive, it takes very little to be over the limit

Fire safety

- Check your smoke and heat alarms are working. Replace batteries if necessary
- If you have an open fire make sure your chimney is swept before winter. Always use a fire guard, secured in position, to protect against flying sparks from hot embers
- Never place Christmas cards or decorations around the mantelpiece
- Check your Christmas light plugs are fitted with the correct fuse, don't overload extension leads and ensure all electrical devices are Intertek and BEAB approved
- Always switch Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed
- Decorations can burn easily – don't place them near lights or heaters
- Never leave cooking unattended especially when using hot oil. For early warning of fire consider a heat alarm in your kitchen
- Take time to check on elderly relatives and neighbours this Christmas as they are at greater risk from fire, particularly if they suffer from ill health or disability

For more advice and information from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service check out their Winter and Festive Safety leaflet or go to their website: www.firescotland.gov.uk

Worrying about money

www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/southlanarkshire

Step 1 What's the problem?

I suddenly have no money

- Lost job / reduced hours
- Lost money / unexpected expense / fraud / scam
- Disaster (for example flood or fire)
- Relationship breakdown
- Money stopped (for example failed a medical)

I have been sanctioned. I am waiting on a benefit payment / decision

- Made a new claim for benefit
- Benefit payment is delayed
- Waiting for a benefit decision

My money doesn't stretch far enough

- Deciding between food / fuel / mobile credit
- Low income or zero hours contract
- Statutory Sick Pay too low to cover costs
- Not sure if eligible for support
- Change of circumstance (for example new baby / bereavement / illness / left partner)

I have debt

- Mortgage, Rent or Council Tax arrears
- Gas or electricity
- Credit or store cards
- Personal loans and overdrafts
- Owe friends and family
- Benefit repayments
- Any type of debt, whether large or small

Step 2 What are some options

1. Scottish Welfare Fund

People on low incomes may be able to get a crisis grant from the Council. This is a payment to help you cope during an emergency or disaster, or due to unexpected expenses. Crisis grants do not have to be paid back (not a loan).

2. Maximise Your Income

Anyone who is struggling financially can get a benefit check and speak to an advisor for free and confidential advice. A benefit check can ensure that you are receiving all the money you are entitled to, especially if your circumstances have changed recently.

Speaking to an advisor could also help with managing gas and electricity bills and make sure you're not missing out on things like school clothing grants or free school meals.

3. Debt Advice

Debt can happen to anyone. Free advice and support can help you find ways to manage your debts and reduce how much you pay each month.

4. Benefit Advance

If you have made a new claim for benefit and are in financial hardship while you wait for your first payment, you may be able to get an advance to afford things like rent or food. It is important to get advice before taking out an advance. Benefit advances have to be paid back and the money will be taken from your future benefit payments (a loan).

5. Hardship Payment

If you have been sanctioned, you may be able to request a hardship payment from the Jobcentre. Hardship payments are not always paid immediately and they're not available to everyone. Hardship payments of Universal Credit need to be paid back (a loan), but hardship payments of Jobseekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance do not (not a loan).

6. Challenge a Decision

You can challenge a benefit decision if your benefit has been stopped/ sanctioned/ reduced/ refused or you have been overpaid. Most benefit decisions need to be challenged within one month.

7. Help is available for Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Step 3

South Lanarkshire Council: Money Matters Advice Service help with options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Information and advice on debt and benefits, including assistance with claim forms, appeals, and checks to ensure you are receiving all you are entitled to.

0300 029 0041

www.moneymatters.advice@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Online self-referral form:

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/mmms

Home Energy Scotland
help with options 2 and 3

Help to save and make sure you're not overpaying on energy bills, including help with discounts and a benefit check.

0808 808 2282

www.homeenergyscotland.org/reduce

Christians Against Poverty (Cap)
help with option 3

Free debt advice and help.

0800 328 0006

www.capuk.org

Or call 0751 185 4759 to speak to a local advisor for more information.

Citizens Advice Bureau
help with options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Citizens Advice Bureau: Hamilton

Support with debt, benefits, housing and employment and more.

01698 283 477

www.hamiltoncab.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau: East Kilbride

Support with debt, benefits, housing and employment and more.

01355 263 698

www.ekcab.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau: Rutherglen/Cambuslang

Support with debt, benefits, housing and employment and more.

0141 646 3191

www.rutherglencab.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau: Clydesdale

Support with debt, benefits, housing and employment and more.

01555 664 301

www.clydesdalecab.org.uk

South Lanarkshire Debt Helpline help with option 3

Debt helpline managed by Hamilton CAB providing debt and money advice to anyone in South Lanarkshire.

01698 757 600

SLDebtHelpline@hamiltoncab.casonline.org.uk

Project 17 help with option 7

Housing and money advice for families with children facing severe poverty/homelessness because they have NRPF.

07963 509 044

www.project17.org.uk

The Unity Project help with option 7

Support to have NRPF condition removed if applicable and other support.

www.unity-project.org.uk

Other supports

South Lanarkshire Council - Help if you are homeless or facing homelessness.

0303 123 1012

Out of hours number: **0800 242 024**

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/LocalHousingOffice

Social Security Scotland

You may be eligible for support from Social Security Scotland. For example, Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods can help with the costs of having a child.

0800 182 2222

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot

Rent Income Support Team

Support to South Lanarkshire Council tenants who are claiming Universal Credit.

0303 123 1012

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

The Beacons

Recovery hubs / one stop shop for people facing challenges with drugs and/or alcohol.

01698 755 926

www.thebeacons.org.uk

Women's Aid

Support, information and access to temporary accommodation for women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

24-hour helpline: **0800 027 1234** or **Phone** 01355 249 897

www.wasler.org.uk

Lanarkshire Mind Matters

Links to mental health information, advice and help, wherever you live in Lanarkshire.

www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk

Carluke Listeners

Confidential one-to-one listening service.

07434 843 518 (call or text)

www.onecarluke.org.uk/carluke-listeners

Healthy Valleys

Emotional and practical 1:1 and groupwork support, to reduce health inequalities and enable people to live healthier and happier lives.

07859 062 831

www.healthyvalleys.org.uk

Healthy n Happy (CamGlen)

Emotional and practical support that helps you connect with others, increase confidence and learn new skills.

www.healthynhappy.org.uk

Agape Wellbeing

Services and activities for the local community to promote positive wellbeing.

01355 242 316

www.agapewellbeing.com

Forth Community Resource Centre

IT enquiries and help to 'do it online' if you don't have a computer or don't know what to do.

01555 811 002

www.forthcommunityresourcecentre.yolasite.com

Shelter

Free housing advice.

0808 800 4444

www.scotland.shelter.org.uk

Turn2Us

Information and financial support.

0808 802 2000

www.turn2us.org.uk

StepChange

Debt advice and money management.

0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org

Debt Advice Foundation

Advice on any aspect of debt.

0800 043 4050

www.debtadvicefoundation.org

MoneyHelper

Advice to help improve your finances.

0808 802 2000 |

0770 134 2744 (WhatsApp)

www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Independent Advocacy

Independent advocates can help you get the information you need and support you to put your choices across to others.

www.siaa.org.uk/find-an-advocate

Lanarkshire Carers

Information, advice and support for people who care.

01698 428 090

www.lanarkshirecarers.org.uk

Local support

South Lanarkshire Infoline for information on mental health and wellbeing services:

0303 3000 133

NHS Inform: Health info that anyone living in or visiting Scotland can trust:

0800 22 44 88

www.nhsinform.scot

Calm Distress Registration - Lanarkshire Mind Matters:
www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs

(search for Calm distress registration)

Locator Tool:
www.vaslan.org.uk

Information on Mental Health and wellbeing

Formerly Elament, now rebranded to: Wellbeing Matters Lanarkshire.

Your first stop for online mental health and wellbeing information in Lanarkshire.

www.wellbeingmatterslanarkshire.co.uk

Financial support and advice

My Life My Money App

Search for **My Life My Money** on your App store.

South Lanarkshire Council www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/debt

Other numbers

Samaritans:
116 123

Breathing Space:
0800 838 587
www.breathingspace.scot

AA – Alcoholics Anonymous:
0800 9277 650
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Email: help@aamail.org

Narcotics Anonymous National Helpline:
0300 999 1212
www.ukna.org

ParentLine:
08000 28 22 33

NHS 24: **111**

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0800 027 1234**

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: **0303 123 1015** Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

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