



# Keep warm

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## Keep healthy

Helping you keep your  
child warm at home





## Your keep warm pack

With expensive fuel costs and colder weather, it can be difficult to keep our homes warm enough. For many people, including children, living in a cold home can lead to illness and for others it can worsen existing health conditions, especially for those who spend a lot of time indoors or have restricted mobility. This keep warm pack has been supplied to help your child to stay warmer at home during cold weather. Additionally, many of the items can be worn under a coat for extra insulation when going outdoors.

Keeping an eye on room temperature is important and the temperature card provided in this pack will help you to do this. Your main living room should be around 18–21°C with the rest of the house at least 16°C. If your home falls below these temperatures or if you are struggling to keep your home warm, please see the next section to find out about support that may be available to help you and your family stay warmer in your home.



# Support to make winter more affordable

## Energy efficiency

Improving the energy efficiency of your home is one of the simplest ways of saving energy and combating rising energy prices. Getting such measures installed may not cost as much as you think. Finding out what grants and discounts are available is easy. Bryson Energy manages the Bryson Energy Advice Line, which is funded by the Department for Communities through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It provides independent and impartial energy advice to domestic householders in Northern Ireland plus referrals to energy grants and other sources of help in the region. The number is 0800 1114 455 and web link is [www.brysonenergy.org/what-we-do/our-services/advice](http://www.brysonenergy.org/what-we-do/our-services/advice)

## Income/benefit entitlements

Whether working or not, ensure you are getting all the money and support you are entitled to. Make the call and speak to a local benefit adviser on Tel: 0800 232 1271 or visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/makethecall](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/makethecall), or get advice from the independent advice sector such as your local Community Advice or Advice NI office.

## Budgeting for fuel

Oil Stamp Saving Schemes are coordinated by a number of local councils across Northern Ireland. If available in your area, the scheme lets you buy £5 stamps to save towards part or full payment of your next oil delivery. They are available to purchase in many retail outlets and Post Offices and are accepted by most oil suppliers. Contact your local council for further information.

Oil Buying Clubs operate in a number of neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland so consider joining a club near you. Club members benefit from the lower prices negotiated from community bulk buying. To find out if there's a club near you, contact Bryson Energy on Tel: 0800 1114 455



# Tips to help keep your child warm at home

- For older children the items in this pack can be used to help keep them warmer at home. Several thin layers of clothes trap body heat better than one thick layer. Clothes made from wool, cotton or fleecy materials are warmest.
- Getting ready to go outside in the cold takes time to do properly, especially with young children. Leave enough time to put a coat, hat and gloves on your child before they leave the house. A hat is especially good for keeping warm outdoors (and always remove wet clothing when returning indoors).
- Enjoy healthy eating: a healthy diet doesn't have to be expensive and you and your family can eat a wide range of delicious foods while keeping an eye on your intake of sugar, fat and salt. In colder weather try to eat at least one hot meal a day and have plenty of hot drinks



throughout the day including a non-caffeinated hot drink before bedtime. For information on healthy eating visit: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/healthy-balanced-diet](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/healthy-balanced-diet)

- Keep active: we all know that exercise is good for our overall health and it can also help to keep your child warmer by improving circulation. If it's very cold or icy outside, encourage active indoor play.
- If your child is sitting down a lot, thin layers or a blanket will help keep them warm. Put the blanket over their knees or shoulders to help keep them warm when watching TV, reading a book or lying down to rest.
- Check your child is not cold in bed at night. Feel their feet and tummy to see if they need socks or extra blankets and make sure the bedroom windows are closed.
- Try to minimise condensation in your home, for example: keep lids on pots and, if available, use extraction fans when cooking (if not available, briefly open a window to let any steam escape); try not to dry clothes on radiators; and if you use a vented tumble dryer make sure it is vented outside.
- Do not put furniture in front of radiators and close curtains at night to retain the heat generated inside your home.
- Never use a hot water bottle with electric blankets.
- If using an electric blanket please make sure it is working properly, it should be serviced at three years old and every year until it's 10 years old when you should dispose of it. Contact your local council Home Accident Prevention Officer for further information. For further information on fire safety and electric blankets visit [www.nifrs.org/home/staying-safe/community-safety/home-fire-safety/](http://www.nifrs.org/home/staying-safe/community-safety/home-fire-safety/)



# Tips during winter weather

- In the event of **extreme** weather, try to plan ahead in case you are unable to leave your home for a time. Ensure you have enough food, fuel and any prescription medication you may need (ask your pharmacy if they offer a home delivery service for your repeat prescriptions as this can be especially helpful in cold weather).
- **Protect yourself/your family from flu.** Flu occurs every year, usually in the winter. Sometimes flu can lead to serious illnesses or make existing conditions worse. The best way to protect yourself is to get the free seasonal flu vaccine if your GP offers you the vaccine. For more information visit: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/flu-vaccine-adults](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/flu-vaccine-adults)
- If you rely on an electricity or a water supply for your healthcare, ask to be included on your utility provider's **Critical Care Register**. For example, if you rely on electrically powered medical equipment this could be vital during power outages to ensure your household reconnection is prioritised.
- If you have a gas or oil fired central heating boiler have it serviced annually by a qualified Engineer, to ensure it is working safely and efficiently. For more information visit: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/domestic-oil-installation-and-boiler-servicing](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/domestic-oil-installation-and-boiler-servicing) or [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/domestic-gas-installation-and-health-and-safety](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/domestic-gas-installation-and-health-and-safety)
- To help prevent chimney fires you should have the chimney and liners cleaned frequently by a suitably trained person (at least once a year for smokeless fuels, at least twice a year for bituminous coal, quarterly for wood burning stoves when in use, once per year for oil and once per year for gas).





This will eliminate the build-up of soot, clear blockages, prevent fumes from entering the room and highlight any remedial work that is required.

- Take the following precautions with open fires and stoves:
  - Do not overfill an open fire grate and always use a spark guard, or consider using a safety guard if you have young children or pets.
  - Do not place a mirror or furniture too close to the fire.
  - Make sure the fire is out before going to bed or leaving the house.
  - Never interrupt the air supply by blocking air vents or air bricks.
  - Have a working smoke alarm on every floor and test it every week.





## Public Health Agency

### **Public Health Agency**

12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.

Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

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