

PRODUCED BY THE EAST LOTHIAN MENTAL HEALTH
PARTNERS' GROUP

Keep Well This Festive Season

A quick guide to
winter wellbeing

HANDY TIPS

SERVICES AND
SUPPORT

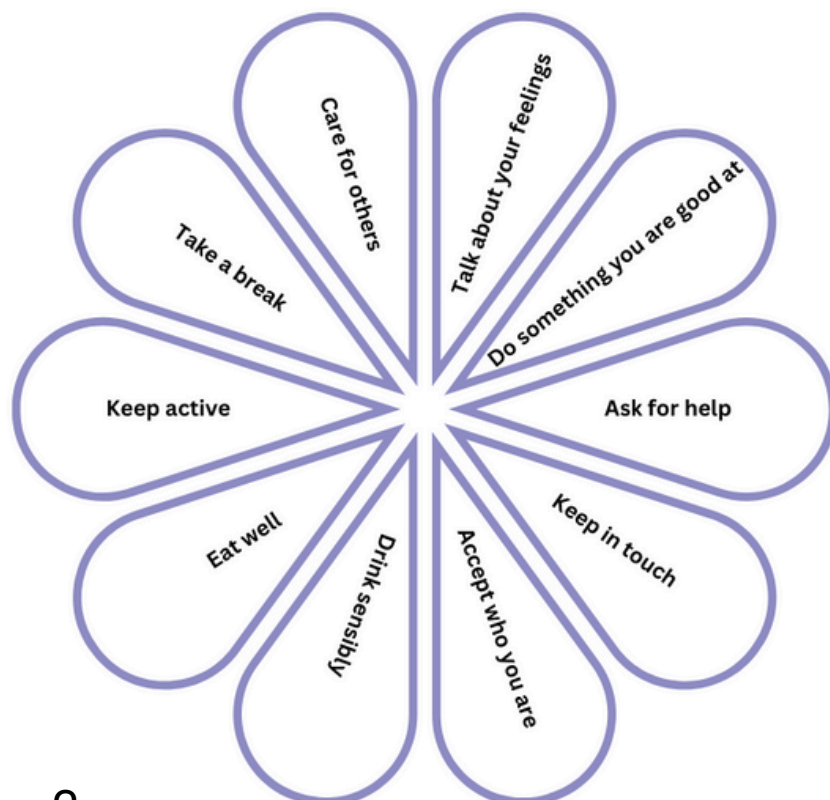
Fending off the winter blues

'I've found the way of having the happiest Christmas is doing what's right for me. Making careful choices about who I spend my time with and keeping in mind that it's just one day. The interactions I have with people throughout the year are just as important.'



The Festive season can be cosy, exciting and filled with good will to all people. However, depending on your circumstances and how you are feeling, it can also be stressful, expensive, isolating and hard to bear.

The East Lothian Mental Health Partners' *Keep Well This Christmas* Guide is useful for anyone who is worried about their mental health and wellbeing this winter. It offers some handy tips and signposts you to services that can help. It also gives a breakdown of some local mental health services opening times over the Festive period.



Flower power

This diagram gives you a quick overview of 10 things that can help to improve your health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with some of them, the following pages will give you some help and advice that you may find useful.



'Try to be honest with people if you're finding things overwhelming and you're not feeling up to getting involved.'

Some top tips from Mind UK

Planning ahead

- Plan ahead and think what you need to help you cope in unfamiliar places (identify somewhere you can take a break or bring things with you that will help you to feel more comfortable)
- If routine is important to you, try to stick to as much of your regular routine as you can during Christmas time
- If you have flashbacks, panic attacks or dissociation, make a note of what helps during these moments and keep it with you
- If places have difficult memories for you, try to plan to spend as little time as you can in them or just don't go
- If you are really not looking forward to doing something, ask yourself if it is really necessary for you to do it. Maybe you can do it for a short time or do it in a different way that is more comfortable for you.
- Make a list of essential services you might need and their Christmas opening hours (see end of this leaflet for more information)
- Make sure you have pre-ordered any essential medications you take so you don't get caught out by pharmacies being closed over the Christmas period
- If you are worried about feeling lonely or isolated over the festive period, think of ways that you would like to pass the time. You could do something creative or plan a walk in the park or countryside.
- If you are in a hospital or a care home, ask what activities they have planned that you could take part in
- If you are not going to be with others at Christmas, you might be able to chat or video call friends and family, or see if they can meet you sometime over the festive period

- Sometimes traditions can be a bit oppressive particularly if you are worried about money or if you've lost someone close to you. So how about doing things a bit differently? These could be a one-off or the start of a new tradition.

Coping with money worries

- Be open with others – let them know you are struggling with your finances – you won't be alone
- Get help from Citizens Advice or access a copy of East Lothian Council's Cost of Living Crisis leaflet – [Help during the cost of living crisis | East Lothian Council](#). You can also go on Step Change's website – [Helping Each Other Through Christmas. StepChange](#)
- Look for local offers or events
- Look for free or low-cost items online – Gumtee, Vinted, Depop, Ebay
- Try to avoid comparisons – it really is the thought that counts!



Look after yourself

- Be gentle and patient with yourself
- Remind your self that it won't last for forever
- Set your boundaries
- Let yourself experience your own feelings
- Take time out
- Let yourself have the things you need

'I'm trying to be kind to myself, like making myself a self-care stocking with things that will help.'

Talking to other people

- Let people know if you are struggling
- Join an online community to talk to people with similar experiences to yours, for example, Home – Side by Side
- Tell people what they can do to help.

If it's all getting too much

If you are struggling this Christmas, you may want to find support with your mental health straight away. You can:

- Call the Samaritans on 116 123
- Text Shout on 85556 – which is a free, UK-wide crisis text service
- Contact Breathing Space – which is a free, confidential phone and webchat service for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.



NHS Five Wellbeing Pillars

Carers of East Lothian

Caring through the festivities

Throughout December, Carers of East Lothian are available to support carers. If you would like to talk to someone who understands what this time of year can feel like when you are looking after a loved one, you can contact us at the centre. Our opening hours are Monday to Friday 10 – 4. There is always a Carer Support Worker available who can arrange a suitable time to give you a call.



During the month of December, many of our Carer Support Groups run as normal. We run groups in Dunbar, North Berwick and Musselburgh. We also run groups for people caring for someone with mental health issues, for parent carers, male carers and an online support group for people who may find it difficult to attend a group in person. There is a weekly singing group at East Lothian Community Hospital and a monthly craft group. These groups provide opportunities for peer support from other carers, who may be in similar situations. If you are not a member of these groups, but you are interested in becoming one, please contact us on centre@coel.org.uk or 01316650135 to enquire further.



We will be open for carers to drop into the CoEL office on 27th December between 10 and 2 for warm drinks and nibbles. Please contact us if you would like to come along. If you would like to refer yourself to CoEL, go to <https://www.coel.org.uk/contact-us/online-referral-form/>

Messages from carers to carers:

We asked our Carers Panel which is made up of carers and former carers if they have any tips for managing this time of year. This is what they said:

- Keep to a routine much the same as in previous years. For example, opening presents at the same time and keeping mealtimes the same. No big surprises nor too many people. Keep it as simple as possible and do as much forward planning as possible so that you as the carer can enjoy the day as along with everyone else.
- Forget the cleaning up, take a break, however small, whenever you can catch 5 mins.
- Toys, books etc should keep the children amused for a little while so sit down and take advantage of someone not needing your full attention.
- If any visitors arrive, get them to join in to help lighten your load.
- Christmas doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be enjoyed with happy memories.
- I find being well organised in the preparation/shopping to let myself not get flustered and to try to avoid the Christmas rush as this causes a great deal of stress.
- Though we are on our own we still pull crackers and tell jokes. Eat when we feel like it.
- I try to make it feel like a different special day as who knows what the future might bring. Make the most of these special days for yourself as a carer build memories.

Please contact Carers of East Lothian on centre@coel.org.uk or 01316650135 if you would like to access any of our support.



Eastspace

If you are looking for more information about ways you can help yourself to feel better, services that you might be able to access or you need to know how to get help in an emergency, Health in Mind's East Space website is likely to have an answer. Check it out at <https://eastspace.org.uk/>

Christmas and New Year opening for some local services

Here is some information about mental health support over the Christmas period.

Anam Cara

Anam Cara supports woman whose aim is to improve their emotional well-being. They help women to safely explore subjects like vulnerability, authenticity and low self-worth, and help develop skills and techniques that are true "game changers."

Anam Cara will be closed from 19th December to 6th January 2025. We will not be offering any services throughout this period. As always, we will be advertising other services available (during this period) on our social media pages - <https://www.facebook.com/thelothians/>

Andy's Man Club

We run talking groups for men aged 18+ who have either been through a storm, are currently going through a storm, have a storm brewing in life or just want to meet a good group of people with the aim of improving one another. No referral, no registration and no charge. Even the brew and biscuits are free!

Just turn up about 6:45pm for a 7pm start. There is no waiting list. Andy's Man Club offers peer-to-peer support for men, who can talk or just listen if they want. no judgment, confidential and free.

Andy's Man Club runs from 7pm till 9pm every Monday except 30th December and bank Holidays.

You can get more information by emailing info@andysmanclub.co.uk All locations can be found on the website <https://andysmanclub.co.uk/find-your-nearest-group/>

Bridges Project

Bridges Project is a youth service including Employability support, Young Carer support, Personal Development support and independent living support for young people aged 12-18.

You can refer yourself or be referred by another agency. Services are delivered on an appointment-only basis and Bridges will be closed from 5pm on Monday 23rd December, re-opening on at 9am on Friday 3rd January.

Phone 0131 665 1621 but please note that we currently have long waiting lists for all of our services.

Changes

Changes is a community health project in East Lothian, here to help you achieve and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing. We provide support to anyone over the age of 16, living, or registered with a GP in East Lothian.

We offer a wide range of services and activities including one-to-one therapy, support groups and courses, and healthy living activities.

Our services are free and open to everyone. We can help with a variety of challenges which may include stress, panic, low mood, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry, depression and negative thinking.

Our groups and courses are friendly, welcoming and inclusive and offer opportunities to meet new people, get active and get involved in your local community. Find out more about Changes on their website - <https://www.changeschp.org.uk/>

You can refer yourself to Changes by phoning 0131 653 3977 or emailing Info@ChangesEastLothian.org. Changes will be closed from Tuesday December 24th and will reopen on Monday January 6th.

CWIC Mental Health

CWIC Mental Health is an NHS primary care service for people in East Lothian aged over 17 years and 9 months. We work closely with GP practices, Adult Mental Health services and local third sector services to help you get the right support for your needs. We will listen to you and work with you to help you find better ways to manage your mental health.

CWIC takes self referrals on 0300 790 6292 , line open from 9-4pm.

CWIC is not a crisis service and our current wait time for an appointment is around 7 weeks. CWIC is closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and 2nd January 2025.

Held In Our Hearts

Held in Our Hearts offers baby-loss counselling and support. You can refer yourself or be referred by another agency. Find out more about this at our website <https://heldinourhearts.org.uk/> - and click the Find Support button to make a referral.

The service is appointment only and can be face to face or online/by phone.

The office will be closed from Friday 20th December at mid-day, and will reopen at 9am on Monday 6th January. There will be no appointments during this time.

Email info@heldinourhearts.org.uk, or phone 0131 622 6263.

Keep The Heid Mental Health Café

Keep The Heid Mental Health Cafes offer a safe space to talk about mental health. Sessions are facilitated by a mental health professional and peer volunteer, both with lived experience of mental health problems. Users can expect a warm welcome from the group. Some people come every week to sessions, others come as and when. Some people meet socially outside of the group but our main focus is on providing a safe space to talk about how, without judgement, your mental health is affecting your life.

Sessions are completely free. There is no need for a referral, to book in advance or for a formal diagnosis. Anyone aged over 18 is welcome and sessions are held in easily accessible community spaces with refreshments provided.

Our last 2024 session in Tranent will be on Tuesday 17 December with sessions starting again on Tuesday 7 January 2025, North Berwick last session for 2024 will be Thursday 19 December, starting again on Thursday 9 January 2025. The last Haddington session of 2024 will be on Friday 20 December, starting again on Friday 10 January 2025.

For more information, email keeptheheidcafe@gmail.com, phone 07548 136 575 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/p/Keep-The-Heid-100075905712479>

Live Well East Lothian

Live Well East Lothian offers gentle movement and exercise classes for those living with or recovering from chronic long-term conditions or events, or even for those just wishing to improve general stability and fitness whilst increasing social connectedness. Live Well East Lothian classes will pause at the end of the day on Friday 20th December and resume on Monday 6th January (excluding Anna's Zoom class which will resume 13th January). More info at <https://www.livewelleastlothian.org/>



Lothian Bipolar Self-help Group (Hybrid)

The Lothian Bipolar Self-help Group brings people together who want to provide information, peer support and self-management guidance to individuals affected by bipolar. Group members have their own experience of bipolar and help each other to stay well. Members meet regularly in friendly and supportive environments, learning about the condition, investigating new treatments, sharing life stories, doing fun things like meeting for coffee, going to the cinema or for a walk and taking part in low-cost activity sessions at gyms throughout Edinburgh. Carers and friends/family are also very welcome – they play an important role in helping maintain wellbeing.

The main group welcomes adults of all ages and usually meets on the first Thursday of every month from 7pm – 8.30pm. A hybrid approach is being adopted, giving group members the choice to attend meetings either face-to-face or remotely via Zoom. As of April 2024, the hybrid meetings have been taking place in the Edinburgh Conference and Training Venue, 16 St Mary's St, Edinburgh EH1 1SU.

The group's website provides information about bipolar and links to helpful information sources. Visit [Eastspace](#) for more information.

The Lothian Bipolar Carers Group

This group is available to people aged 18 years old and over from anywhere in the Lothians who are affected by bipolar, including carers and supporters.

The Lothian Bipolar Carers Group is part of the wider Lothian Bipolar Self-help Group who want to provide information, peer support and self-management guidance to individuals affected by bipolar including carers and supporters. Group members have their own experience of supporting individuals with bipolar.

The meetings take place via Zoom on the last Tuesday of each month from 7pm–8.30pm and provide a safe space to learn about the condition, share life stories and access peer support. You can refer yourself and there is no cost or waiting list. Visit [Eastspace](#) for more information.

NHS Wellbeing Hub

A drop-in information-giving service, hosted by NHS Adult Mental Health for those who are struggling with their mental health, finance, welfare or employment. Also available for people supporting others, including professionals and referrers interested in learning about available resources.

It's for anyone aged 18+ living and working in East Lothian. It's a drop-in so no referral or appointment needed.

The Wellbeing Hub is located at the entrance foyer of East Lothian Community Hospital, Haddington, Hospital Road, EH41 3PF.

It will be closed Wednesday 25th December and 1st January. Open all other Wednesdays 12-2pm.

Scottish Cot Death Trust

Bereavement support for bereaved family members who have lost a child (up to age 5) suddenly and unexpectedly. This is an online and phonenumber service and you can refer yourself. if you want to get in touch, please email contact@scottishcotdeathtrust.org or phone 0141 357 3946. The service will not be available between 25 December 2024 until 2 Jan 2025 (inclusive).

Scottish Self-Harm Network Live Chat

Self-Harm Network Scotland provides free compassionate support, resources, and information about self-harm. The power of lived experience enables us to work with each person to find their own way forward. You can chat to one of our team from 6pm – 10pm, 7 days a week or leave a message with us and we will get back to you as soon as we can with options for support. Child Line – 0800 1111, Parent Line – 0800 028 2233. All services are closed 25th & 26th December and 1st and 2nd January, but the Chat line will be operating an extended service from 4pm to 10pm between Christmas and New Year. You can also email Scottish Self-Harm Network at <https://selfharmnetworkscotland.org.uk/contact-us/>

The Ridge Support Service

The Ridge Support Service provides community-based professional support to individuals and families living in the Dunbar and East Linton area, including our villages. We work in a person centred and holistic way across a wide range of needs including housing and homelessness; mental health; benefits; substance use; employability, training and in-work support.

The Ridge will be open for access to our larder and also our full range of support from our support team over the Festive Period on:

- 23rd December 2024 from 9am to 5pm
- 24th December 2024 from 9am to 2pm
- 27th December 2024 from 9am to 1pm
- 30th December 2024 from 9am to 5pm
- 31st December 2024 from 9am to 2pm.

The Ridge will be closed on 25th and 26th December 2024 and 1st, 2nd and 3rd January 2025, fully reopening on 6th January 2025.

Mental health services at NHS 24

Anyone can experience mental health issues, at any point in their life. You don't have to deal with these problems alone. NHS 24 mental health services are available to everyone in Scotland, of all ages. The services we offer include listening, offering advice, and guiding you to further help if required.

More info at <https://www.nhs24.scot/>

Phone 111 if you're:

- feeling distressed
- in a state of despair
- suicidal
- in need of emotional support.

For an emergency ambulance phone 999.

Keep up to date with NHS Lothian Christmas and New Year arrangements

If you need to know about NHS Lothian services over the Christmas period, the best places to go are:

- their website – <https://www.nhsllothian.scot/>
- their Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/lothian.nhs>

Social Work services

Adult and Children's Social Work services will not be open on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and 2nd January. They will be operating a limited service between Christmas and New Year.

East Lothian Council and East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership publish festive opening times for all their services closer to Christmas on <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/>

Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Support

The Emergency Social Work Service (ESWS) provides an emergency social work service for situations that can't wait until social work office hours. In an emergency situation occurring between 5pm and 9am on weekdays or on a public holiday, please call (Freephone) 0800 731 6969.

ESWS provides a support service to all social work units and carers in the Lothian region when their managers or support liaison workers are not available.

GP Practices and Pharmacies

Your GP practice will have its own website so make sure to check there for opening times over the Christmas and New Year holidays, and also for the deadlines for ordering prescriptions online. Some practices also have their own Facebook sites, which are a great source of information.

Your notes and useful contact numbers

