

Support available for families over the Christmas holidays

Dear parent/carer,

The festive holidays are almost upon us.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With this cold weather I want to remind you that help is available over the Christmas holidays.

Warm Welcome Centres

Hillingdon Council and its partners have opened a network of centres across the borough where you will be guaranteed a warm welcome, a place to come have a drink and a chat and stay warm. Many of these centres have access to free wi-fi and activities for parents and children.

We know that keeping warm is important to maintaining good health and our centres are free to use and open to everyone.

You can find your nearest warm space here: <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/warm-welcome-centres>

Cost of Living Support

Christmas is always an expensive time of year, and if you are struggling to make ends meet due to rising prices information and support are available.

<https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/cost-of-living>

Here you can find information about what financial support is available from the government. You can access debt advice and support with managing your finances. You can find help with reducing your energy bills and even find out if your children are entitled to free food and activities as part of our Holiday Activities and Food programme.

<https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/december-haf>

Your Family's Health

Our local health services are facing unprecedented pressure.

So, we must do as much as we can to keep ourselves fit and well.

Many groups of people in our borough are entitled to free COVID-19 boosters and flu vaccinations.

They offer your best protection against becoming seriously ill if you catch these viruses.

I would urge you to protect your family, your community and yourself by taking advantage of these vaccinations.

They are available from your GP, pharmacy and many other locations. To find out more, visit: <https://www.hillingdoncyp.cnwl.nhs.uk/>

You can find lots of information about local health services and childhood illnesses on the add link to CNWL website.

This includes information on how to manage your child's illness at home, when to contact your pharmacist or GP and what action to take at the rare times when you need more immediate urgent care.

We know that many parents are also concerned about other illnesses that we have seen an increase in over recent weeks.

This winter, the NHS is encouraging people to get the help they need by using the NHS 111 online service.

This service can assess and direct you to the most appropriate local help, including treatment centres, GP surgeries or your pharmacist. The service can also arrange a call back from a health professional if needed.

If you need medical help fast, use NHS 111 online to get assessed and directed to the right place for you.

Please visit: **111.nhs.uk**

Once again, I would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday period.

Kelly O'Neill,
Director of Public Health,
London Borough of Hillingdon