



Safe. Warm. Well.

**Sarah's
Carers**

How you or your loved one can keep safe
and well this winter

Winter Checklist 2020/21



WHO ARE WE?

Nurse-led and established in 2013, Sarah's Carers is a Suffolk-based home and live-in care provider with a mission to raise the bar on what good quality, personalised care should be. Contact us for a friendly and confidential chat:



01394 824 053



www.sarahscarers.com



enquiries@sarahscarers.com



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INTRODUCTION

Safe. Warm. Well

Welcome to the Winter Checklist from Sarah's Carers.

The shorter winter days and long nights can create uncertainty for frail older people, especially if they have memory loss, and what families tell us is that this can lead to confusion, for example, about eating meals or taking medication at the right times.

We've also found that many older people sleep in their chairs too long during the colder months. This can cause swollen legs and increase the risk of falls.

This Winter Checklist provides an opportunity to check if mum/dad are coping, and to consider whether they need help or support in any way. We have included a simple checklist on pages 12 and 13.

Recognising the signs that help is needed

Getting old can be difficult, both physically and emotionally. If your mum or dad, or anyone you know, is struggling, then now could be a good time to have a chat about the help they may need.

What our own experience as carers has shown, is that this kind of conversation doesn't usually happen soon enough. It's also a difficult one to have. Leaving it too long can mean there's a higher risk of something suddenly happening, such as having a fall, which can lead to an unwanted hospital stay.

An hour or two of care each day can be incredibly positive and help mum and/or dad to focus their energy on staying well and doing more of the things they love.

Have a think about whether mum/dad are still able to look after themselves well:

- Are they calling you more often, perhaps because they are disorientated about the time of day?
- Are they missing meals? Older people should eat at least one nutritious hot meal each day
- Are they staying hydrated and warm?
- Are they regularly getting up and moving about, to keep their strength and mobility?
- Are they coping with simple tasks like getting dressed and washing?

Checking in on them is so important and getting even a small amount of care in place, sooner rather than later, can make all the difference.

Take care and stay safe

The Sarah's Carers team





KEEPING WARM

Keeping your home warm

There are a number of simple steps you can take to keep your home warm and comfortable as the weather begins to drop.

Keep your heating at a constant temperature throughout the day. The ideal temperature for your living room is 21°C / 70°F, while 18°C / 64°F is better for your bedroom.

Close your curtains as soon as it begins to get dark to keep the heat inside. To retain warmth, consider fitting thermal liners.

Make sure to close all windows each evening. This will stop warm air from escaping while you sleep. To save on heating bills, close off rooms you are not using.



Do you have a secondary source of heat? A small plug-in radiator can make all the difference if your boiler breaks down and a plumber is unable to reach you.

Keeping yourself warm

Instead of wearing one thick layer, wear several loose layers of clothing– the trapped air between each layer will help to keep you warm. Remember to wear thermal underwear and woollen socks too.

Electric blankets not only keep your bed toasty, they can also alleviate aching joints and aid restful sleep.

Make sure to regularly check your electric blanket for any creasing, damp patches, loose wires or scorch marks.

It's recommended that you buy a new electric blanket every ten years. Your blanket should also be checked by an electrician every three years. And remember, never use an electric blanket and a hot-water bottle together.

Looking after your boiler

Having your boiler serviced regularly will ensure it runs safely and efficiently throughout winter. Gas boilers should be serviced every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer – oil and LPG boilers should also be serviced annually by an OFTEC approved engineer. Visit the Gas Safe or OFTEC website for more information (details can be found on page 14).

When preparing for the engineer's visit, remember you won't have access to hot water while your boiler is being serviced. Your cold water supply shouldn't be affected, however, so you should be fine to make a cuppa!



Find your main stopcock and check that it's easy to turn. If your water pipes freeze, they may burst – you'll need to turn off the water at the stopcock if this happens! If your stopcock is broken or stuck you may need to get it replaced.



Looking out for symptoms of hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous drop in body temperature below 35°C (normal body temperature is around 37°C). When the body temperature drops, the heart, nervous system and other organs can't work normally. It is serious and can be life-threatening.

Frail older people lose body heat faster than younger adults. They have a lower metabolic rate which can struggle to generate enough heat to help maintain the normal body temperature. In addition, thinning of the skin is another factor that may contribute to the 'feeling of cold' in older adults. The most prominent symptoms at the outset are **shivering**, **pale skin** and even **bluish tinge of the fingers, lips and toes**. The person may be **confused** or have **slurred speech**, be **drowsy** or **lack energy**.

The key point is that an older person may not recognise the symptoms of hypothermia in themselves and therefore will not do anything about it. It's therefore important to encourage mum/dad to wear layers of clothing which are more effective at retaining body heat.

If you see signs of hypothermia, call a doctor immediately or dial 999.

FREE

Energy Advice

Are you paying too much for your energy bills because you think that making changes would be too much of a fuss, or would cost you more, or because you feel that your questions might be silly...? Let us help with

FREE, Friendly, Energy Advice!

We have funding to help reduce your energy bills!



Diana: 07494 572153 Annette: 07957 779623
www.ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk/warm-homes

Ask our trained Rural Energy Team about:

- **PRACTICAL HELP, ASSISTANCE & ADVICE** on switching energy supplier which could save you hundreds of pounds.
- **UKPN PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER** - for extra support when there's a power cut.
- **HEATING GRANTS AND BENEFITS** - you might be surprised to qualify for them.
- **GETTING YOUR HOME PROPERLY INSULATED** - including draught proofing.
- **SMART METERS** - we'll explain the myths & benefits.
- **LOANS OF TEMPORARY HEATERS** in an emergency.

Could you do with a little extra help this winter?

Suffolk Community Foundation's Rebuilding Local Lives Surviving Winter Appeal has funding to support those in need. Talk to us so we can get you to the right help.



Rural Coffee Caravan WARM HOMES

is a project in partnership with, and funded by, UK Power Networks, offering free guidance and support to people in rural Suffolk.



Help with heating costs

Winter fuel payment

Were you born on or before 5th October 1954? If so, you could be entitled to between £100 and £300 towards your winter heating bills.

The Winter Fuel Payment is a yearly tax-free payment to help with your heating costs, which is usually paid between November and December. You should receive payment automatically if you already receive the State Pension or another social security benefit, such as Pension Credit.

However, if this is your first year claiming payment, you will need to contact the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on 0800 731 0160. Make sure to have your national insurance and bank details to hand when you call!

Warm Home Discount

If you receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit, you may be eligible for the Warm Home Discount this winter.

The Warm Home Discount is a one-off £140 payment towards your electricity bill, which is usually paid between October and April.

The Warm Home Discount is administered by your energy supplier, so the money will be added as credit to your electricity account. If you use a prepayment meter, you will likely be offered a top-up voucher instead.

Not all energy suppliers participate in the scheme, however – remember to bear this in mind when choosing or switching suppliers.

Cold Weather Payment

The Cold Weather Payment is provided to those receiving Pension Credit when the weather drops below 0°C / 32°F for seven consecutive days.

For each seven day period of cold weather – between 1st November and 31st March – you will receive £25 per week. You'll be paid automatically within 14 days of the cold weather spell.



Have you joined your energy supplier's Priority Service Register?

The Priority Services Register is a free service provided by energy suppliers and network operators. To be added to the register, you need to contact your supplier.

The benefits of being on the register include help with taking meter readings, password protection for phone calls and home visit and priority support in emergency situations.

Suppliers also offer free gas safety checks for those of pensionable age – your supplier will be able to provide further information.



KEEPING WELL

Keeping healthy

Book an appointment for your annual flu jab. This year, more than ever, it's vitally important for older and vulnerable people to get vaccinated. While the shot won't protect against all types of flu, it will protect you against the major strains.

If you're aged over 65, make sure you book your free vaccination as soon as you can. We also recommend you ask your doctor about getting a pneumonia shot.

Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly in the run up to Christmas. It's also worth asking your local pharmacy if they offer a prescription delivery service.

Stock up on cold, flu and sore throat remedies. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you on how to manage minor illnesses at home.

Eating well

Try to eat at least one hot, nutritious meal each day, even if you don't feel too hungry. Food is a vital source of energy, which keeps your body warm.

Keep at least five ready meals in the freezer in case you are unable to leave the house for any reason. You can also keep a pint of milk and a loaf of bread in the freezer too.

Consider taking a Vitamin D supplement. Vitamin D is produced by our bodies in response to sunlight – we need lots of it to maintain healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

As sunlight is limited during colder months and we are already spending more time indoors due to Covid-19, Public Health England has advised everybody to take a daily vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter.

Sleeping well

Sleep is key to emotional wellbeing and we all need the right amount and quality in a 24 hour period – about eight hours for the average adult, and less as we get older. As the weather gets colder and you aren't able to get out and about as much as you're used to, however, you may begin finding it more difficult to get a good night's sleep.

Suffolk Mind has put the following five top tips together to help you get a better night's sleep:

1. Have regular going to bed and getting up times – and stick to them.
2. Cut down on caffeine in the second half of the day.
3. Avoid watching TV (or internet surfing) in the two hours before bed.
4. Learn and practice relaxation exercises to help you go off to sleep more easily.
5. Keep your bedroom well ventilated and dark – black out curtains are recommended.





KEEPING ACTIVE

Being active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle for us all, particularly as we begin getting older. Not only is keeping active great for your general health and wellbeing, it also generates heat which can help you keep warm.

Preventing falls

Regular movement and activity may help to prevent falls or wobbly moments. We are naturally less active during the winter season, and so it's important now more than ever to purposely introduce more movement into our day. This activity will help to build strength, prevents loss of bone mass and improves balance therefore reducing the risk of falling.

Stay hydrated

Dehydration is associated with a higher risk of ill health. Try to drink 8 to 10 glasses of water daily. The easiest way to drink more fluids is to build on existing habits. For instance, drinking more fluid as part of everyday routines, such as when taking medication or at mealtimes. If you build this up gradually in small steps, eventually it will become part of your routine. A common myth is that you must drink water, but tea, coffee and juices all count.

Connect with others

Involve other people in the activity you are doing. Having a support network is a great way to stay motivated, accountable and share the positive impact physical activity can have. This could be going for a walk with another person, joining in with an online exercise class or talking about the activity you are doing with friends and family.

Aim to be active every day

Sitting down for long period of time isn't good for our health. Ideally everyone should stand up and move around at least every hour,

Start small and build up the amount of exercise you do each day. For instance, try walking for 5 mins (if it is safe for you to do so) and aim to increase that time by a small amount each week.

You don't need fancy equipment to keep fit at home

You don't need lots of fancy equipment to exercise at home. If you are wanting to do some low-level weight bearing exercise, you could try using household items such as tins or a water bottle. Water bottles are great as you can vary the weight by gradually adding more water as you gain more strength.

The Active Wellbeing service delivered by the team at Active Suffolk is continuing to help with ideas during the pandemic. Find out more about this at www.activesuffolk.org/



KEEPING CONNECTED

Loneliness is something we will all experience from time to time, sometimes by choice, sometimes by circumstances we can't control. This year, in particular, social distancing has meant that many of us have been isolated from our friends, family and support networks.

Being lonely can have a serious effect on our mental wellbeing, especially for those who live alone. If you have been feeling lonely for a while, the first step is to notice and acknowledge it, even if it's just to yourself.

Below are some suggested ways to help you deal with feeling lonely.

Have a chat with an old friend. If the idea of a phone call feels too daunting, you can always send a letter, text or email. You may feel that your friends are busy and won't have time for you, but this is rarely the case and they will likely be pleased to hear from you.

Plan something you enjoy. Even if you aren't feeling up to it, try to make time to do something you enjoy each week. This could be as simple as listening to your favourite music, reading a new book or even getting out for some fresh air.

Reach out to others. It's harder to get out and about right now and meet new people, and so you may find that chatting with somebody new over the phone can make you feel less lonely.

You can sign up for the free Age UK telephone friendship scheme, which will match you with a friendly volunteer for a weekly chat. The Silver Line charity also has a 24-hour helpline which you can call for a chat whenever you need it. Details for both services can be found on page 14.

Join your local Good Neighbour scheme. Many parishes and towns across Suffolk operate a Good Neighbour scheme, which offer befriending services or practical support in the community. See page 14 for more details.

Getting online

The internet can help you keep in touch with family and friends and build new connections. From email to video calls and social media, connecting online can help you feel close to others if you are feeling lonely.

To access the internet, you will need to be connected to it. This can be set up through your landline or your mobile phone. You'll also need a device, such as a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Many devices that access the internet have a screen you can touch which is often easier than using a keyboard.

You can ask a family member or carer to help you get online. Your local council will also offer support.

Once you are connected to the internet, www.learnmyway.com has a wide range of free, online courses to teach you essential digital skills, like setting up an email account and making a video call.

For advice or troubleshooting, the technology charity, AbilityNet, has trained volunteers who are just a phone call away. More details can be found on page 14.



KEEPING SAFE

Fire safety

As we get older, the risk of fire and fire injury at home increases. Added to this, the need to keep warm through winter poses additional fire safety challenges.

Here are some simple measures you can take to keep your home safe through the colder months:

Candles must always be secured in holders away from flammable materials. Never leave a lit candle unattended.

Keep plug-in radiators away from walls, furniture, curtains or beds. Never use a portable radiator to dry clothes and make sure to switch it off at the socket before you go to bed.

Check your plugs, sockets, cables and appliances for any damage. Don't ignore serious warning signs such as sparks, burning smells or crackling sounds.

If you have an open fire use a fire guard to prevent sparks catching fire. You should also ensure your chimney and flues are swept annually to prevent fires or a build-up of carbon monoxide (details on finding a HETAS-approved chimney sweep can be found on page 14).

In the event of a power cut, use a battery operated torch rather than a candle. Keep a torch and a spare set of batteries somewhere in your home that is easy to reach.

Choose the location for your Christmas tree carefully. Trees should be kept away from fireplaces, candles, radiators and doorways. Make sure your hanging decorations are away from sources of heat too.



Safer Home Visit

Did you know that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service provide free 'Safer Home' visits to people aged over 65?

During your visit a Prevention Officer will spot fire hazards, test your smoke alarms and offer life-saving advice on staying safe at home. They will even help to install free alarms where needed.

Details on how to apply for a Safer Home visit can be found on page 15.



Keeping your home safe

The nights are getting darker, which means opportunistic crime is on the rise – especially in rural areas. Suffolk Constabulary has compiled some tips to help you keep your home safe this winter.

Lock

- Keep front doors locked even when you are at home and especially if you are in the back garden. Never leave your doors unlocked for family members or carers.
- Use window limiters to allow air in instead of keeping windows fully open. Remember to close all windows if you leave home, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- Install window locks on all upstairs windows that can be easily accessed by a flat roof.
- Never hide a spare key outside. Burglars know the usual hiding places. Leave a key with a trusted neighbour or family member or have a police-approved key safe fitted out of sight.

Light

A burglar will do everything they can to avoid being seen. During the hours of darkness, a home without any lights on indicates not only that it may be empty but that neighbours are unlikely to see anyone approaching.

- 'Dusk-to-dawn' sensor security lighting is a cheap, low cost way of making sure the front of your home is well-lit.
- Use timer switches on internal lights so they switch on and off automatically and make it look like there is someone at home.
- Hedging and shrubs to the front of your property should be pruned to no higher than 1m and trim trees up from the ground to 2m. This will allow a clear line of sight across your property and will prevent your garden being used as a hiding place.

Hide

- Ensure that valuables like handbags and jewellery can't be seen from the window. Don't keep expensive jewellery in obvious places such as jewellery boxes. Use a safe or keep it hidden away.
- Don't leave large amounts of cash around the home or documents with your name, address or other personal details, such as a bank statement or bill that fraudsters could use.
- Keep dustbins and wheelie-bins away from fencing or gates as these can be used by thieves to climb into windows or used to escape.
- Remember to mark your valuables using a UV pen and register them on the national property register at www.immobilise.com.

You can find more information by searching for the 'Keeping Your Home Safe' guide on the Suffolk Police website (www.suffolk.police.uk/).





Keeping warm

Keeping your home warm

- ☐ Keep heating at a constant temperature throughout the day
- ☐ Close your curtains and windows at dusk
- ☐ Purchase a plug-in radiator for emergencies

Keeping yourself warm

- ☐ Wear one thick layer rather than several thin layers of clothing
- ☐ Check electric blankets for creasing, damp patches, loose wires or scorch marks
- ☐ Make sure your electric blanket is checked by an electrician every three years

Looking after your boiler

- ☐ Your boiler should be serviced every 12 months by a registered engineer
- ☐ Remember that you won't have access to hot water during your boiler service
- ☐ Find your main stopcock and check that it's easy to turn

Help with heating costs

- ☐ Check if you're eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment
- ☐ Ask your energy supplier about the Warm Home Discount scheme
- ☐ You may receive a Cold Weather Payment if the temperature gets very low
- ☐ Join your energy supplier's Priority Service Register

Keeping well

Keeping healthy

- ☐ Book your annual flu jab
- ☐ Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, especially before Christmas
- ☐ Stock up on cold, flu and sore throat remedies

Eating well

- ☐ Try to eat at least one hot and nutritious meal each day
- ☐ Keep at least five ready meals, a pint of milk and a loaf of bread in the freezer
- ☐ Consider taking a daily Vitamin D supplement

Sleeping well

- ☐ Stick to a regular going to bed and waking up time
- ☐ Cut down on caffeine after lunch
- ☐ Avoid watching TV in the two hours before bed
- ☐ Learn and practice relaxation exercises
- ☐ Keep your bedroom well ventilated and dark



Keeping active

- ☐ Build movement into your day to prevent falls in the long-term
- ☐ Stay hydrated
- ☐ Connect with others
- ☐ Aim to be active every day
- ☐ Use household items to exercise

Keeping connected

- ☐ Have a chat with an old friend
- ☐ Plan something you enjoy
- ☐ Reach out to others
- ☐ Ask family member/carer/local council to help you get online
- ☐ Visit Learn My Way and take a free digital course

Keeping safe

Fire safety

- ☐ Candles must be secured in holders away from flammable items
- ☐ Keep plug-in radiators away from walls, furniture, curtains or beds
- ☐ Check plugs, sockets, cables and appliances for damage
- ☐ Use a fire guard on an open fire to prevent sparks igniting
- ☐ Keep a torch and a spare set of batteries somewhere accessible
- ☐ Choose the location for your Christmas tree and decorations carefully
- ☐ Organise a free Safer Home Visit with Suffolk Fire and Rescue

Keeping your home safe

- ☐ Keep front doors, locked even when you are home
- ☐ Use window limiters and close all windows if you leave home
- ☐ Install window locks on windows that can be easily accessed
- ☐ Never hide a spare key outside
- ☐ Consider sensor security lights
- ☐ Use timer switches on internal lights
- ☐ Keep hedges, shrubs and trees pruned to provide a clear line of sight
- ☐ Ensure your valuables can't be seen from the window
- ☐ Don't leave cash or documents containing personal details around your home
- ☐ Keep dustbins and wheelie-bins away from fences and gates
- ☐ Mark your valuables using a UV pen



HANDY CONTACTS

AbilityNet

www.abilitynet.org.uk
0800 269 545

Active Suffolk

Wellbeing and mental health advice
www.activesuffolk.org
01394 444 605

Age UK Telephone Friendship

www.ageuk.org.uk/services

Anglian Water

www.anglianwater.co.uk
03457 919 155

Aspect Living

Meals on Wheels service
www.aspectliving.org.uk
01473 749 927

East Suffolk Council

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Gas Safe Register

www.gassaferegister.co.uk
0800 408 5500

Good Neighbour Scheme

Befriending and practical support in Suffolk
www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk
01473 345400

HETAS Approved

Find a Chimney Sweep
www.hetas.co.uk/
01684 278 170

Ipswich Borough Council

www.ipswich.gov.uk

NHS website

Information about healthy living
www.nhs.uk

OFTEC

www.oftec.org
01473 626 298

The Silver Line

www.thesilverline.org.uk
0800 4 70 80 90

Suffolk Community Foundation

Support for vulnerable people
www.suffolkcf.org.uk
01473 602 602

Suffolk County Council

www.suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Family Carers

Advice and support for unpaid family carers
www.suffolkfamilycarers.org
01473 835 477

Suffolk Fire and Rescue

Arrange a safer home visit
Search on www.suffolk.gov.uk/
01473 260 588

Suffolk MIND

Mental health support including telephone counselling for people aged 70+
www.suffolkmind.org.uk
0300 111 6000

Warm Homes Healthy People

Search on www.suffolk.gov.uk
03456 037 686

Winter Fuel Payment helpline

www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment
0800 731 0214



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Sarah's
Carers

Over the years we have talked to many family members who have called us in a state of anxiety because they have a current care company that is failing to meet their needs. The common stories we hear about are a lack of respect, dignity and compassion, or carers turning up late and then not finishing all the essential tasks, let alone providing any additional help or noticing if something is wrong.

At Sarah's Carers, we like to be able to offer a really personal service which means we'll notice if something has changed and will give advice or take action. We also know that listening, being accurate with information and getting things done just the way our clients like them is so important, from making a cup of tea or a round of toast to using the washing machine.

See our website for lots of lovely care stories which illustrate the warmth and compassion of Sarah's Carers.

CONTACT US



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