

An illustration of three anime-style girls standing in a snowy environment. The girl on the left has blue hair and wears a tan knit hat with a pom-pom and a pink and white striped scarf. The girl in the middle has orange hair and wears a brown and white striped scarf. The girl on the right has dark hair with cat ears and wears a dark red scarf. They are all wearing winter jackets and looking towards the viewer.

Bolton

Together

Registered Charity in England and Wales (1163466)

Stronger This Winter

Bolton Together's IThrive

Winter Support for those aged 11-19



Welcome to Bolton Together's latest IThrive winter resource.

Winter can sometimes feel long, cold, and challenging, but it's also a perfect time to pause, reflect, and build your strength – inside and out. This resource is designed for young people aged 11 and over, and you can enjoy it on your own, with friends, or with family.

Inside, you'll find creative activities, fun challenges, and helpful tips to help you feel more confident, connected, and resilient. There are ways to stay active, spark your creativity, try new things, and care for your mental wellbeing, all designed to make you feel stronger and more supported as the winter months go on.

Whether you want a quiet moment to reflect, a boost of inspiration, or a fun activity to share with others, this resource is here to help you grow, shine, and feel your best – even when it's chilly outside.

The Bolton Together Team



A Winter That Works for You

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The holiday season can be exciting yet overwhelming due to bright lights, loud noises, and crowded spaces. It's normal to feel tired, anxious, or frustrated as sensory changes and disrupted routines can be stressful. Recognising personal challenges is key to enjoying the season. Focus on what feels manageable and enjoyable by listening to your body, planning breaks, and choosing preferred activities. Caring for yourself and communicating your needs helps others support you.

- Create your calm corner
- Plan your schedule
- Choose your activities
- Sensory-friendly holiday projects
- Take mindful breaks
- Communicate your needs

Personal Holiday "Comfort Kit": Create a small bag with items that help you feel calm (headphones, fidget toys, cozy socks, scented lotion).

Light and Sound Test: Try decorating a small area at home with different lights and music levels to see what feels comfortable.

Custom Activity Plan: Make a list of holiday events you want to attend and set a limit on how long you'll participate.



Get creative this winter — doodling, journaling, and making art can help you express your feelings, reset your mind, and boost your mood when the days are dark and cold.

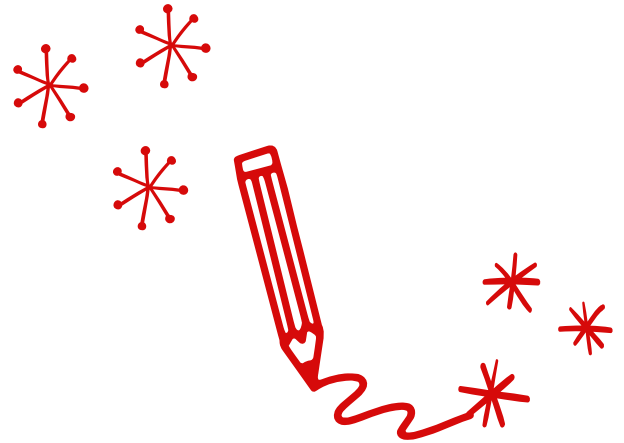
Try some of these doodle prompts to get your creativity going.

“What does warmth look like?” — draw your cosiest place or feeling.

“Nature in winter” — doodle your favourite winter plant, animal, or landscape.

“Kindness ripple” — show how one kind act spreads around you.

“Soundtrack of my winter” — sketch images that match your favourite songs



“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”

— Maya Angelou



Mindful Moments: Colour and Reflect

Taking a little time to colour can help you relax, refocus, and spark your creativity. Put on some calm winter music, enjoy the moment, and let your artistic side shine.



Creative Sparks: Explore Your Thoughts Through Writing

Writing and being creative can help you understand your feelings, clear your mind, and feel stronger inside.

Use your imagination to explore how light and warmth, and can appear even in the coldest season.

Choose one of the prompts below and write for 10–15 minutes. Let your creativity flow. You can write a short story, poem, or descriptive scene.

Prompts:

1. You find a small light glowing in the snow. Where does it lead you?
2. Imagine a guardian who protects warmth and kindness through winter. What gives them strength?
3. The world is frozen in time — except for you. What do you do in the stillness?
4. A letter appears in the snow. Who wrote it, and what message does it hold?

Writing Tips

- Find a quiet space.
- Don't worry about spelling or structure; let your thoughts come naturally.
- Reflect, don't rush.
- Describe textures, smells, sounds, and colours to bring your writing to life.

- Write for yourself first
- Be honest
- Start anywhere
- Embrace mistakes
- Write in different ways
- Notice your feelings



“Writing lets you slow down and notice what you’re feeling. It’s a space where you can just be you.”

— Ruth Ozeki

Finding Hope and Purpose

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Winter may seem endless with its short days and grey skies, but it's also a chance to reflect and rediscover purpose. Finding hope involves recognising small positives and building on them. Having something to look forward to, no matter how small, can enhance mood, confidence, and energy, helping you persevere through tough times.

Activity: "My Winter Purpose Map"

To explore what brings you joy and purpose, follow these steps:

Step 1 Identify what lifts you up: Write down three things that make you feel good, like helping others or enjoying hobbies.

Step 2 Determine what you care about: List causes that matter to you, such as kindness or the environment.

Step 3 Connect the dots: Find links between your interests and causes, like volunteering or sharing music with friends.

Step 4 Take action: Choose one small action this week that brings you purpose, regardless of its size.

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

— Pablo Picasso



Hope & Purpose Word Prompts

Dream Kindness

Growth Create Connect

Change Courage Joy Learn

Belonging

Friendship Adventure Calm

Strength Giving

Gratitude Inspire Challenge

Balance Light

Circle three words that stand out to you.

Why do they matter?

How could you bring more of them into your winter?

*“Do what you can, with what you have,
where you are.”
— Theodore Roosevelt*



Purpose Mapping

The goal of this activity is to help you notice what truly matters to you: your values, interests, and the impact you want to have, and connect those to a sense of purpose.

Identify what motivates you

- When do I lose track of time because I'm so into something?
- What activities or topics make me feel excited or fulfilled?
- What kind of challenges do I actually like solving?

Notice what matters to you

- What values show up here (e.g., creativity, helping others, fairness, adventure)?
- Which of these feel most important to me right now?

Connect to the bigger picture

Consider how those values could make a difference beyond just you by completing this sentence:

"I want to use my love of ____ to help/impact/change ____."

Finally, **reflect**. Look back at what you have written and ask yourself: "does this feel true to me right now?"

Finding your **purpose** is a gradual **process** that **evolves** over time. It involves reflecting on your **values** and aligning your **goals** with them. This approach can enhance motivation, confidence, and overall happiness.

Understanding Your Emotions

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Winter can mess with how we feel, but not everything you hear about mental health and the cold months is true — let's bust some common myths and find out what really helps.

Myth 1: “Feeling low in winter means there’s something wrong with me.”

Fact: Lots of people feel a bit down or tired in winter — it’s often just your body reacting to less sunlight and colder weather. It doesn’t mean you’re weak or broken. Simple habits like getting outside, staying connected, and doing things you enjoy can really help.

Myth 3: “No one wants to hang out or do anything over winter.”

Fact: Lots of people feel the same way: tired or unsure what to do. Suggesting a small plan (a movie night, a walk, a hot chocolate meet-up) might be just what your friends need too.

Myth 5: “Winter is boring. There’s nothing to do.”

Fact: There’s lots going on! From creative workshops to sports, volunteering, and community events — check out [My Life in Bolton's What's On](#) and [Keep Bolton Moving](#) pages to find activities and meet new people.

Myth 2: “There’s no point trying to stay active when it’s cold.”

Fact: Even a short walk or stretch indoors can lift your mood, reduce stress, and give you energy. You don’t need a full workout — moving your body in any way counts.

Myth 4: “If I’m feeling low, I should just deal with it on my own.”

Fact: Talking to someone (a friend, family member, teacher, or counsellor) can make a huge difference. You don’t have to struggle in silence. Reaching out is a sign of strength.

Myth 6: “Mindset doesn’t matter — winter just sucks.”

Fact: How you think about winter shapes how you feel. Focusing on small positives; like cosy moments, goals, or gratitude, can make the season feel lighter and more manageable.

Let's Keep Bolton Moving > > > >
ACTIVITIES | HEALTH | WELLBEING



Sitting with your feelings

“Sitting in your feelings” involves acknowledging and experiencing your emotions instead of ignoring or quickly trying to fix them. It means slowing down to recognise what you're feeling, such as sadness or anxiety, without judgment. By allowing your emotions space, you learn to understand yourself better, helping them feel less overwhelming over time.

Acknowledge and
allow yourself to feel

Notice where you're feeling it
(what physical sensations are
you experiencing?)

Practice
Mindfulness/Meditation

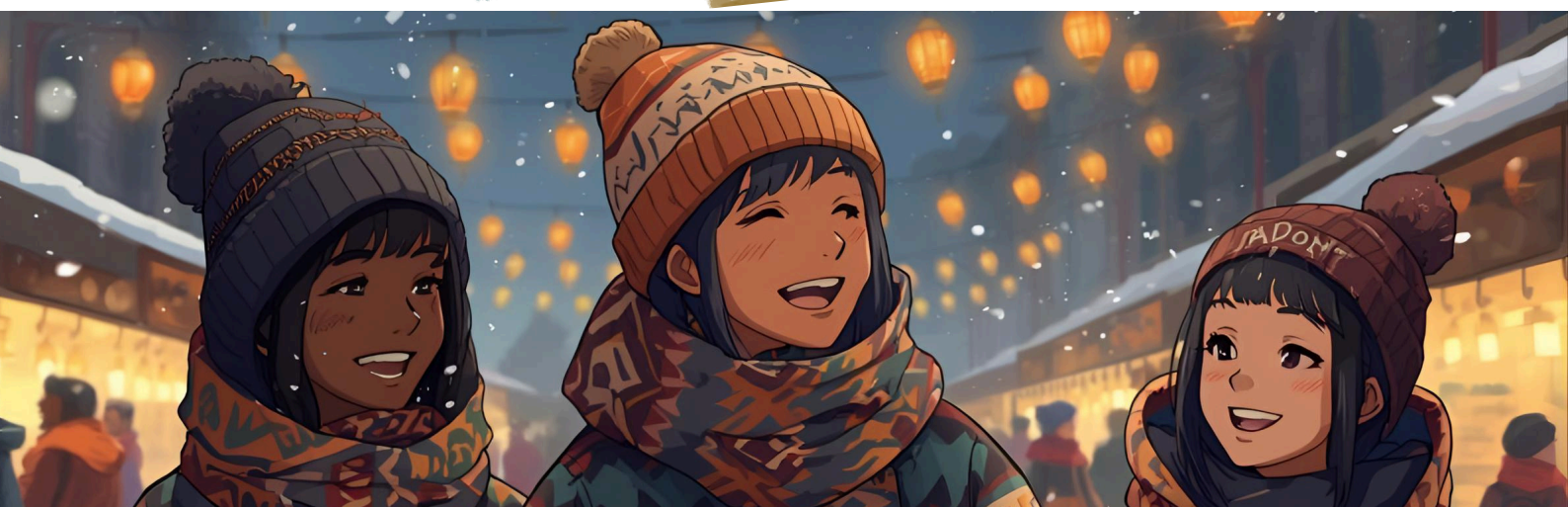
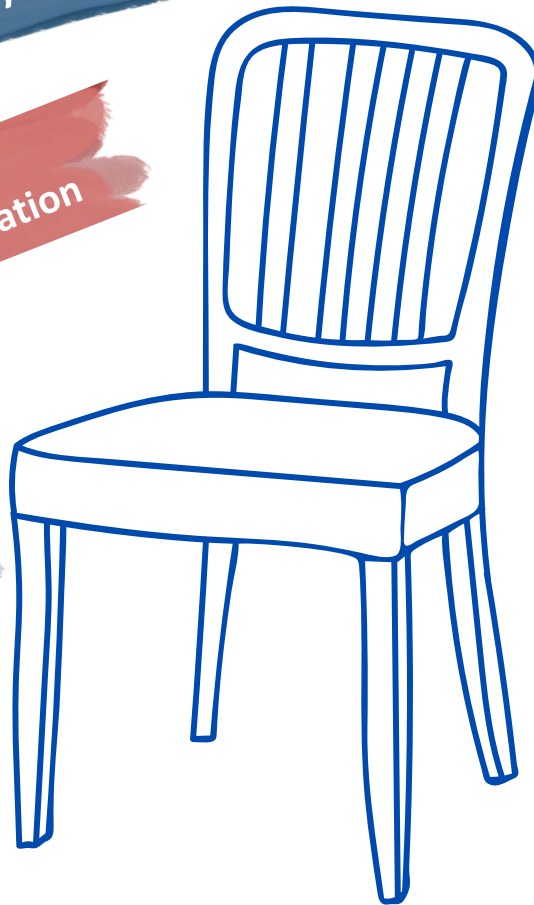
Get Curious

Be aware of how
you are speaking to
yourself

Don't label your emotions
as 'good' or 'bad'

Validate what/why
you are feeling

Practice Compassion (how would you
support a loved one in this
situation?)

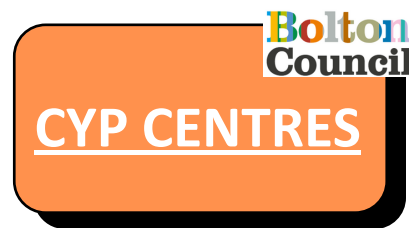


When Home Feels Hard

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Sometimes home doesn't feel like the cosy, peaceful place it's supposed to be — especially in the winter, when everything feels a bit heavier. Maybe people are arguing, maybe it's quiet in a way that feels lonely, or maybe you just don't feel understood. It's okay to admit that home can be hard sometimes. You deserve spaces (at home, online, and in the community) where you feel safe and seen. Below are services and activities to help when home feels hard.



[Bolton Lads and Girls Club](#)



[The Flowhesion Foundation](#)



[Be The Change](#)



[Bolton Solidarity Community Association](#)

Our CYP centers invite young people to participate in groups and activities during the winter break. Explore more by following the links.



Building Your Winter Boundaries Blanket

This activity is designed to help you explore what helps you feel safe, comfortable, and cared for during the winter months. Discover how setting personal boundaries can keep you feeling warm and balanced on the inside, even when the world around you feels cold or busy.

Draw or imagine a big blanket on your page. This is your Boundaries Blanket — it keeps you emotionally warm.

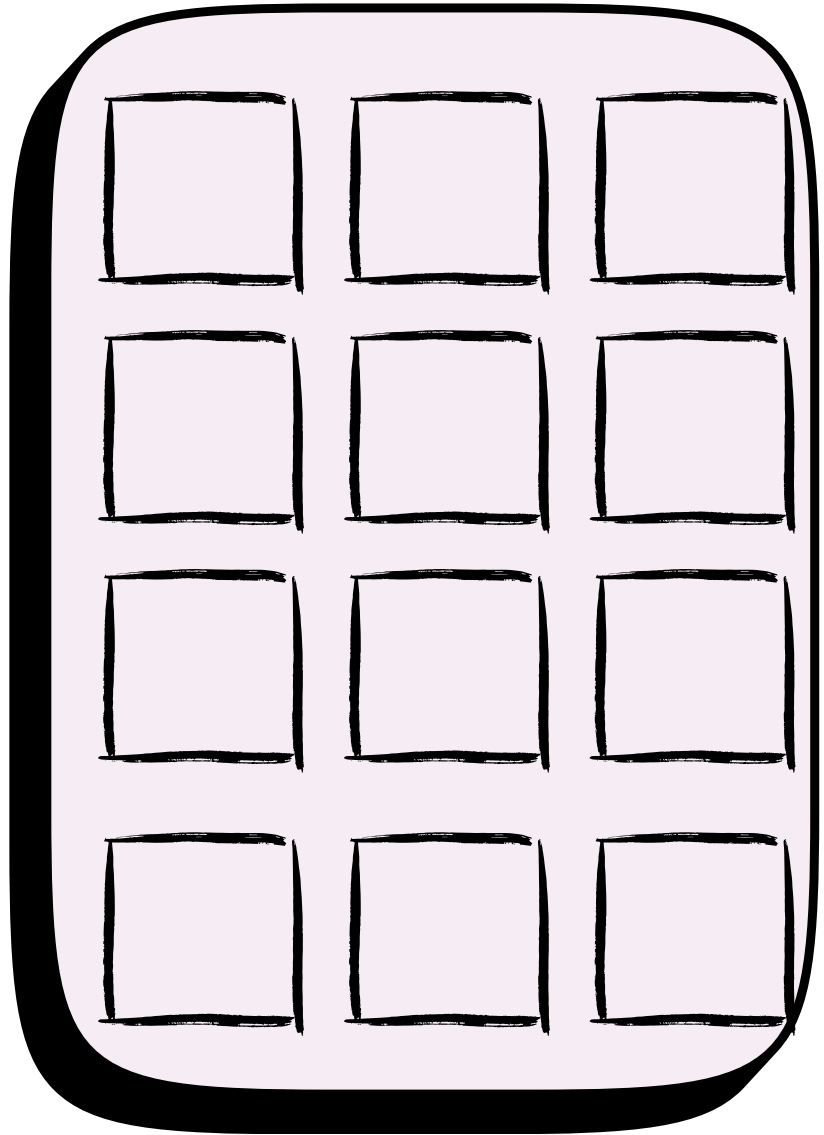
In each patch of the blanket, write or draw:

- Something that helps you feel safe and calm at home.
- A personal boundary you want to set this winter (e.g. “I’ll take quiet time after school”, “I’ll say no when I need rest”, “I’ll ask to talk things through calmly”).
- One supportive action you could take if a boundary is crossed (e.g. talk to someone you trust, go for a walk, journal, message a helpline).

Optional add-on: Use winter colours (blues, whites, silvers) or symbols (snowflakes, stars, mugs of cocoa) to decorate your blanket — each design represents something that keeps you grounded.

Reflect:

- How does setting these boundaries help you stay warm on the inside?
- Which “patch” feels most important to protect your wellbeing this season?



"Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others."

— Brené Brown

Winter Warmth

Make time to **connect** by spending some time playing with a brother, sister, or friend.

Take **notice** of the things around you.

Keep **learning**. Ask friends to recommend a new podcast to listen to.

Be **active** by going out for a walk when it's still light.

Changing Your Mindset

Reset: Slow down and focus on what matters.

Reflect: Consider successes and changes you'd like to make.

Build strength: Challenges can help us feel stronger.

Find comfort: Enjoy cosy moments with drinks, music, or friends.

Look ahead: Use quiet time to dream, plan, and set spring goals.

Accessing Local Warm Spaces



For winter break activities, check the “What’s On” section of the My Life in Bolton website, featuring events for all ages such as music, sports, and crafts. Additionally, Bolton Libraries are serving as Warm Spaces this winter to support those facing cost of living challenges, especially with heating costs.



Scan the QR code to view My Life in Bolton’s What’s On page.

Improving Wellbeing

Things like listening to music and helping your community can really help to improve your wellbeing in the Winter months. The ideas below were provided by the Bolton Youth Council to help other young people this Winter.



Music is proven to improve mood so why not try making a playlist of all your favourite songs to listen to over Winter? These can be songs about the holidays or just songs that put you in a good mood! Here's some examples to get you started provided by the Youth Council:

- Muppet Christmas carol
- All I want for Christmas
 - Santa baby
- Under the Christmas tree – Kelly Clarkson
- Last Christmas – WHAM
 - Let it snow
 - Santa tell me
 - Mistle toe
- Rocking around the Christmas tree
- Micheal Buble songs
- Christmas carols



Activites in the community

Helping out in your community can make a difference to so many people over Winter. Not only this, but it will help you feel fulfilled to help others! Even just getting out to try things that are being offered can help you feel brighter. Try some of the ideas below:

- Having hot chocolates with friends
- Bake with family/ friends
- Support a food bank
- Help in a soup kitchen
- Volunteer at a Christmas event
- Attend Christmas markets
- Go to community events i.e. fireworks/ light shows
- Take part in winter gift programmes in school.
- Snow ball fights



Winter can feel cozy, calm, or sometimes just cold and endless. It's a season that slows things down and gives us time to pause. When things get quiet, it's easy to miss the small moments that make us feel connected — a laugh, a shared story, or even a warm drink with someone who gets you. But connection doesn't always have to be big or planned. Sometimes, a simple chat over hot chocolate can remind you how much warmth there still is, even in winter. So this week, make some time for a "Hot Chocolate Catch-Up." It's a small way to check in with someone you care about — and maybe with yourself, too.



Winter Memories Collage

Make a winter collage with photos, doodles, ticket stubs, lyrics, or words that reflect your season. Embrace creativity and self-expression!

Bake & Bond



Baking isn't just about the cookies or cupcakes; it's about creating something together. What if those treats could spread a little warmth beyond your kitchen? A few cookies shared with a neighbour or friend can turn an ordinary afternoon into something special. So, grab a recipe (or make up your own!) and bake together. Decorate, taste, and maybe "Bake It Forward" by giving a few away — a small act of kindness that can make someone's day a lot sweeter.

Guidance for Challenging Times

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Major events like protests and societal tensions impact our daily lives, influencing our perceptions through social media, school discussions, and personal feelings. It's common to feel unsettled or unsafe during volatile times. Safety encompasses not only physical security but also emotional safety, which includes a sense of belonging, the ability to speak up, being heard, and having access to support.

Research indicates that:

- Safe spaces for youth to discuss current events and concerns enhance emotional safety
- Routines, familiar places, and trusted individuals provide stability during chaos.
- Developing self-care, resilience, and connection skills mitigates stress and worry.



Instead of merely reacting to societal unrest, consider using your feelings to create safety, connection, and clarity. While you can't control external events, you can influence your responses and connections. Instead of waiting to feel safe, take proactive steps to establish your own safe space—mentally, physically, and socially.

To transform feelings into actionable steps, consider the following:

1. Physical & Digital Safety:

- Identify trusted contacts for support.
- Inform someone of your location, especially at large events.
- Limit exposure to distressing news.

2. Emotional Safety & Connection:

- Discuss feelings about current events with a trusted person.
- Hold “safe-zone” sessions to share worries and hopes.
- Engage in comforting activities afterward.

3. Routine / Safe Space:

- Establish a predictable daily routine to alleviate anxiety.
- Designate a calming space to retreat to when overwhelmed.



Extra Help When You Need It

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Bolton Together's IThrive Hub is not a crisis service. If you require urgent support, you can seek help through Bolton's 24.7 Mental Health Support Line by calling **111** for free. You could also speak to a health care professional such as your own GP, Pharmacist, School Nurse, calling 111, or in emergencies only, your local A&E department. Below you will also find details of other support services you can access whether you are a young person or parent/carer.

NSPCC

If you have concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, you can contact the NSPCC's Helpline by calling [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk.

HOPELINE247

0800 068 41 41

HOPELINE247 advisers are here to support you in understanding the reasons behind any suicidal thoughts you may be experiencing. They aim to create a safe environment where you can openly discuss anything in your life that may be affecting your own safety or that of others.

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

Childline is open 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Counsellors are available to listen and support you with anything you'd like to talk about.

shout

85258

Shout is a free, confidential 24/7 mental health text support service for anyone in the UK. They provide round-the-clock support for anyone feeling anxious, stressed, overwhelmed or in crisis. Text 'Shout' to 85258 to speak to a trained volunteer.

SAMARITANS

Samaritans is the charity that prevents suicide through the power of human connection. Connecting people in crisis with trained volunteers who will always listen. Whatever you're going through, call free any time, from any phone, on 116 123.

Bolton Listening Lounge

Bolton's Listening Lounge is now open evenings and weekends, providing warm support and guidance for those facing emotional health challenges aged 17 years and above. Contact them at 01204 917739 or boltonll@family-action.org.uk.



Welcome to



If you are at risk of homelessness, contact Bolton Council's Housing Options Service for advice and support at 01204 335900 or visit their website for more information.

Families in Bolton can get extra support over winter through the Household Support Fund and Local Welfare Provision, helping with food, energy, and essentials. Children on Free School Meals receive holiday vouchers, and the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme offers free meals and activities. Additional help includes money and debt advice, care leaver support, and warm spaces. More information is available at [Bolton Council Household Support Fund](#)

Bolton at Home



If you or someone you know needs food support, Bolton at Home, in collaboration with Urban Outreach and volunteers, operates food pantries in Bolton. To access this support, email pantries@boltonathome.org.uk or visit [the Bolton at Home Food Support website](#) for more information.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, Fortalice offers confidential support 24/7. Call their advice line on 01204 365677 or send a secure message through their website to get help.

Bolton Together

If you are a parent or carer experiencing low mood or anxiety due to parental responsibilities, iThrive offers peer support, resources, and activities—contact ithrive@boltontogogether.org.uk to find out about our parent peer support offer. Alternatively, you can visit our website - www.bolton-together.org.uk/ithrive-support/ithrive-for-parents/.



Parents, carers, and individuals aged 16 and above can access their own talking therapies through the NHS Talking Therapies service by self-referring online at <https://www.iaptportal.co.uk/bolt.html>, and the service will get in touch to provide support.



1Point offers independent counselling and psychotherapy support in Bolton for those aged 17 years old and above. For more information, visit <https://www.1pointbolton.org.uk/> or contact Silverwellbeing on 01204 917732.

Steps to Support: The IThrive Referral Hub

For young people aged 2–19 years (up to 25 with SEND) seeking emotional health and wellbeing support, our IThrive referral hub offers early intervention services. We are not a crisis service. Support is short-term, goal-focused, and strength-based, tailored to each child's interests and needs using flexible, youth-centered approaches. Our strategies and tools aim to improve emotional wellbeing long-term. Referrals can be made through our online form: [**IThrive Referral Form**](#).



Our free online resources for young people are available at [IThrive Support](#). They include:

- an overview of our services,
- previous wellbeing workbooks,
- and links to support from Be Kind To My Mind, Kooth, Mind, YoungMinds, and Shout.

Scan the QR Code below to access our referral form.



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Bolton Youth Council for their invaluable contributions to these wellbeing workbooks. Your insights, creativity, and dedication have helped shape resources that are engaging, practical, and meaningful for young people.

We are also grateful to our partner providers for their input, including Bolton Toy Library, Urban Outreach, Fortalice, BLGC, and Breaking Barriers, whose expertise and support have helped make these workbooks more relevant and accessible.

In addition, we have drawn on a wide range of trusted sources to enrich the activities and guidance in this workbook, including YoungMinds, Mind, Papyrus, Kooth, MindEd, the BBC, and The Health Foundation. These organisations provide evidence-based information, practical tips, and supportive tools that complement the exercises and guidance you'll find here.

Together, this collaboration ensures that the workbook is both youth-informed and grounded in expert mental health support.



If you're looking for trusted mental health support in Bolton, [Be Kind To My Mind](#) is an invaluable resource. It's a youth-led campaign, co-created by the Healthy Minds Youth Project and NHS Bolton, that provides a central hub for mental wellbeing guidance. On the site you'll find an A–Z of mental health topics, a directory of local support services, urgent-help contacts, and practical advice for young people, parents, and professionals. It's a safe space to learn, connect, and know that "it's OK to talk."





BOLTONTOGETHER