YOUNG PEOPLE'S BENCHMARKING FORUM'S (YPBMF) GUIDE TO WINTER WELLBEING



This booklet has been co-produced with YPBMF's Legend's to share with care experienced young people.

There's something special about the colder months, think crisp air, snowy adventures, or the way everything looks different in new light. Every season brings its own kind of magic, so grab the chance to prioritise yourself, and find the things that you enjoy.



Hey friend,

I just wanted to send a little note to remind you to be gentle with yourself this winter. It's the season of enjoying the little things... the warm jumpers, the good laughs, and that blanket that feels like a warm hug on a sharp winter evening.

You have already come so far, we are so proud of everything you have achieved, and you deserve every bit of peace and warmth that comes your way. Take time to rest, smile and do the things that help you feel good.
We might all have different stories, but we share so much too – strength, courage, and the ability to keep on going. You're doing amazing, even on the quiet days.

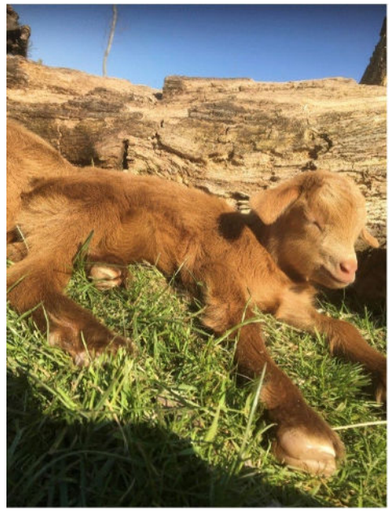
We hope this booklet helps you to know that you're never alone, and to feel the joy in the small things this winter.

Sending love and light your way

Imogen YPBMF Legend on behalf of all at YPBMF

Step Outside: Nature's Role in Winter Wellness

Nature is often closer than we realize. Encountering wildlife brings moments of calmness, comfort, and connection to our day, from creatures big or small. Whether it's a stroll through nearby woods, a visit to a local park or beach, a walk along rivers or canals, or discovering hidden gems like allotments and nature reserves, there are countless ways to step outside and recharge.

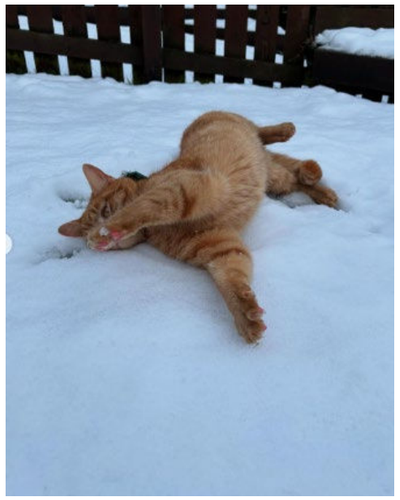


"This picture always makes me think that there's more to come in life"

Nathan

Spending time with animals is a wonderful way to boost your wellbeing.

They're always there for you, ready to listen without judgment, and somehow know just when you need comfort. Their soft fur and cuddles can soothe your senses, and caring for them gives you a sense of purpose. Whether you're sharing your thoughts or simply enjoying their company, animals offer unconditional support and help you feel less alone.



"Spending time with my favourite cat that is my cat but isn't my cat. He has been coming to see me since May 2024. He always puts a smile on my face"

Angela



Spending mindful time in nature can lower stress, improve mood, and help you feel more energized. In Japan, “shinrin-yoku” or forest bathing is a simple yet powerful way to boost wellbeing. Japanese doctors prescribe forest visits as therapy, showing how nature’s sights, sounds, and fresh air can help you relax, recharge, and find clarity, reminding us that even a short walk among trees can make a big difference.

“Swans on a lake” Jamyl

Ideas to try:

Take a look at what’s nearby and think about how you could visit, make a list of new spots you’d like to explore.

If you can’t get outside today, nature podcasts and soundscapes like ocean waves or birdsong can help you feel more connected to nature, no matter where you are.

Soundtrack to Wellbeing: How Music Helps Us Thrive



Music is a powerful way to boost your mood and feel less alone, even when you’re by yourself. Whether you’re listening to your favourite songs, or sharing playlists with friends, music can help you feel connected and understood.

Fun fact: Did you know that listening to your favourite music can actually lower stress levels and boost mood? Scientists call it “musical therapy” so hit play and enjoy yourself!

I love to take myself on a walk around my local area listening to music and just enjoy the nature around me.”

Rihanna

Ideas to try:

Create a playlist that matches your mood or the activity, upbeat tracks for city walks, chill tunes for forest paths, or themed play-lists for walking, cycling, or running outdoors.

Share your playlist with friends and swap recommendations to keep things fresh.

Listen to your favourite playlist or podcast while you complete your daily tasks indoors or outdoors. You could even try out something new, true crime, comedy, or inspiring stories can be a great way to make the time fly and learn something new.

Staying Active: Energize Your Mind and Body

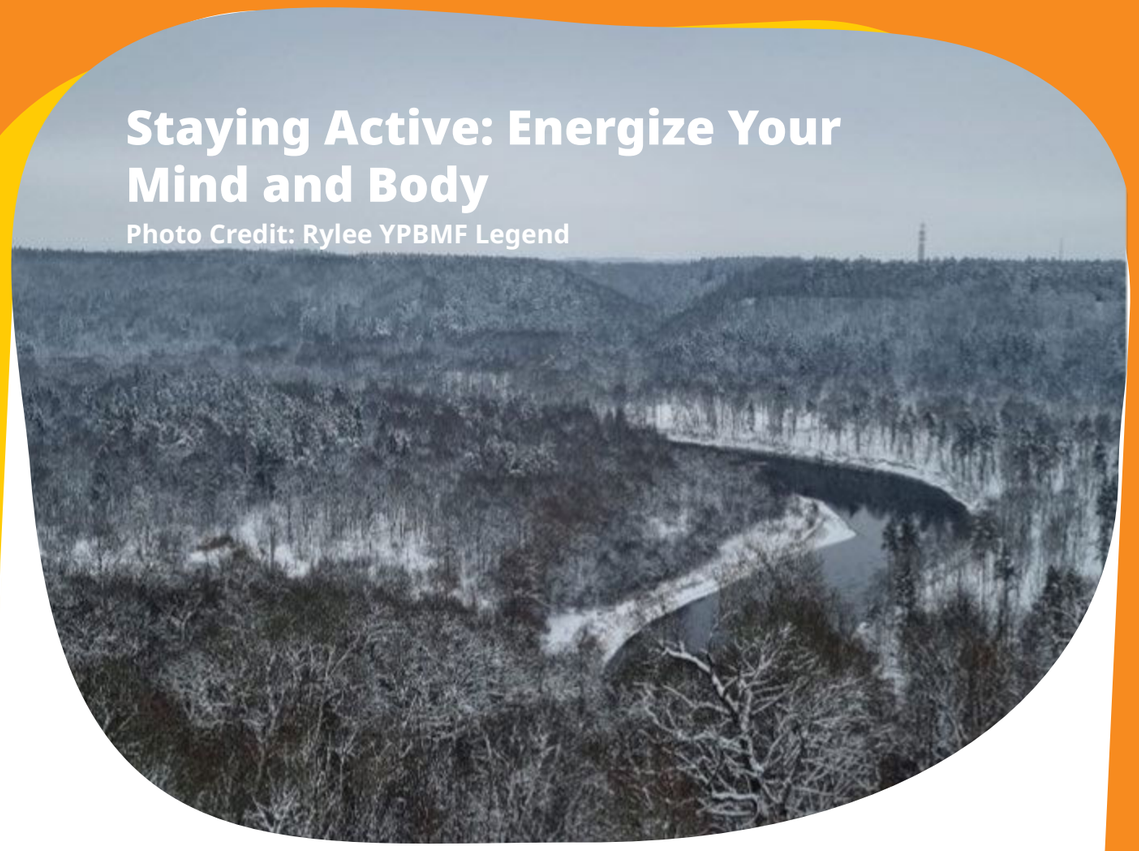


Photo Credit: Rylee YPBMF Legend

Getting active is a great way to boost your energy, get your blood pumping, and clear your mind. Every bit of movement helps you feel good, stay motivated, and brighten up those darker days so find what you enjoy and make it part of your routine.

Ideas to try:

- **A daily walk can boost your mood.**
- **Try racquet sports like badminton or table tennis for some indoor fun.**
- **Head to your local leisure centre for a swim or gym session.**
- **Join a dance class or turn up your favourite music and dance around your room!**
- **Practice yoga or stretching to release tension—cat yoga is a fun option if you have a pet.**

Cosy Night's In: Relax and Recharge

There's nothing quite like a cosy night in to engage in simple pleasures that help you unwind and feel your best. Self-care isn't just about pampering, it's about finding a healthy balance between activity and rest. By making time for relaxation every day, you give yourself space to plan, reset, and boost your wellbeing, so you're ready for whatever comes next.



"You can't beat a good cosy night in with a vibrant bath bomb."

Abbie

Ideas to try:

- **Write down your thoughts, dreams, or plans for the year ahead. Journalling can help you reflect, set goals, and clear your mind.**
- **Make something fun—try drawing, painting, or DIY crafts. Creative activities are a great way to express yourself and unwind.**
- **Find a comfy spot, make a hot drink, grab a blanket or hot water bottle, and get lost in a book or movie.**

Friendship & Community: Your Winter Wellbeing Boost

When the days get shorter and the weather turns chilly, it's easy to slip into hibernation mode, spending more time indoors, and maybe feeling a bit cut off from the world. But here's the secret: winter is actually a perfect time for spending time together! In fact, experts say that regular social interactions can help combat the winter blues and make you feel more energized and resilient. So, don't let the cold keep you from reaching out! Every message, call, or shared playlist is a step toward feeling happier and healthier this winter.

Ideas to try:

Book a phone call with a friend once a week to catch up and share what's going on in each other's lives.

Video chat with someone while you do tasks. Seeing a friendly face can make things more fun and help you feel less alone.

Swap music playlists and listen together, even if you're in different places.

Check out your Local Offer to find out what's happening locally and try something new.



Give Back, Feel Good: How Volunteering Warms Up Your Winter

Photo Credit: Rylee YPBMF Legend

Winter is the perfect time to give back and get involved in seasonal volunteering! Many organizations need extra help in winter, especially with seasonal projects or supporting people. Whether you're supporting other care leavers by helping in your local hub, or lending a hand at a charity shop, volunteering is a fantastic way to meet new people and feel a real sense of purpose. And remember every bit of help counts! Whether you're sorting donations, making phone calls, or just offering a friendly chat, you're making a positive difference for others. Not only does volunteering help others, but it also boosts your own wellbeing by connecting you to your community, filling your days with warmth, and giving you that feel-good glow even when it's chilly outside.

Ideas to try:

Start by considering what you enjoy or care about. Do you love animals, want to support other care leavers, or enjoy helping older people? Volunteering is most rewarding when it matches your interests and values.

If you prefer to stay warm indoors, look for online opportunities like mentoring, writing letters, or helping with digital projects. Micro-volunteering (small, one-off tasks) is a great way to make a difference from home.

My Winter Action Plan

Use this page to jot down your ideas, dreams, and next steps for a season full of wellbeing and joy. Remember: Every small step counts! Celebrate your progress and enjoy the little things that make you feel good.

1. Something I Want to Keep Doing
What's one thing that's already helping you feel good? Write it here so you remember to keep it up!

2. Something New I Want to Try
Is there an activity, hobby, or volunteering opportunity you'd like to explore? List it here to remind yourself.

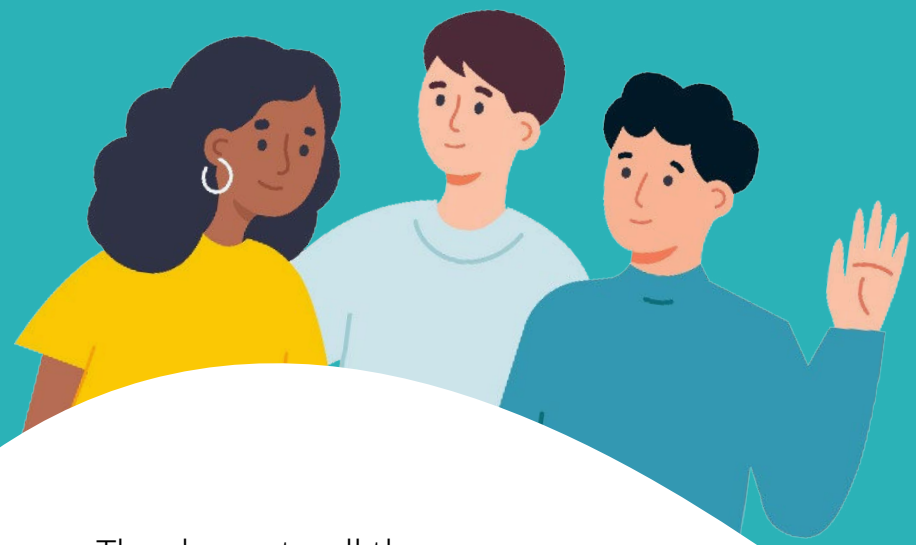
3. My First Step
What's the first thing you'll do to get started? It could be sending a message, booking a class, or just taking a walk outside. Write your action step here!

Other information and support:



National House Project's Energy Champions share online resources, films, and podcasts to help current and future generations of young people learn about energy efficiency at home.

Wigan Youth Council share their recipes for success in Take Care & Cook.



Thank you to all the care experienced young people from YPBMF that shaped this booklet by sharing their ideas and words of advice and encouragement to support other young people.

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) is a forum of over 130 leaving care teams run by the charity Catch22 & funded through membership fees from local authorities. The Young People's Benchmarking Forum is the heart of the NLCBF. Our main aim is to ensure that the voices of care experienced young people are heard loud and clear, as well as to help shape the decisions and priorities of the forum.

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