

WEST LOTHIAN SERVICE USERS NEWSLETTER

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Hi! My name is Claire.

Welcome to my Newsletter!

I am a service user with a severe and enduring mental health problem, and I produce Newsletters to help share information about issues people may experience and support available in the West Lothian community.

I am a volunteer for the Mental Health Advocacy Project (MHAP) and a member of their Management Committee. I enjoy researching news and services. If you have any ideas you think may be of interest for future Newsletters, or if you have details about a local service please contact MHAP on 01506 857230 or email admin@mhap.org.uk

Health

Practice mental health nurse service West Lothian

The practice mental health nurse service offers support to manage your mental health. You may be suffering from stress or feel anxious or depressed. To access this service, you should contact your GP reception to book. You need to be 18 or over to get this support. You may be experiencing poor sleep, poor appetite, or overeating, worrying all the time, or feeling irritable. The practice mental health nurse offers 25 minute appointments where you will be assessed. They will be able to refer you to other services that can help. The Practice nurse team can provide help to those that require more self-help advice but do not need to be in hospital. They offer help, along with your GP to create a wellness recovery action plan.

Different ways you can manage your mental health

The Stopp technique.

You can download the STOPP app from the Apple Store or Google Play.



Decider Life skills

Decider life skills are 12 skills to help you manage your mental health and make better choices. You can visit the website or download the Decider skills app from Apple store or google play.

https://www.thedecider.org.uk/

Westspace App

Westspace is an online self-help resource for West Lothian. You can visit https://www.westspace.org.uk

There are grounding techniques such as focusing on your breathing in the present moment paying attention to things you can smell or taste or touch right now.

Additional self-help apps include WRAP, Sleepio, CALM, No Panic, Samaritans self-help, Silvercloud, Student health, Thrive, Mindshift (for young people).

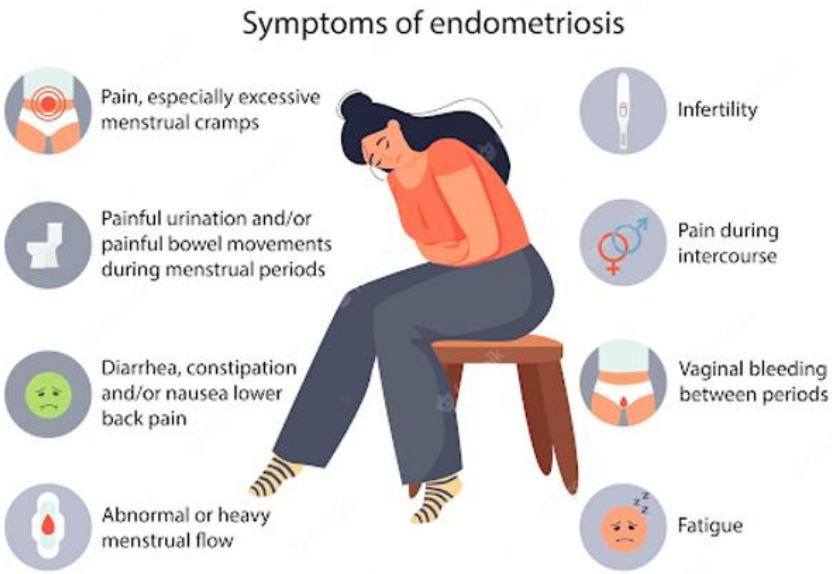
Breathing Space. 0800 838587

SHOUT: text 85258 or Samaritans: 116123 or 08457 909090.

For urgent help if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts. Call NHS 24 on 111 or call emergency services on 999. You can also attend A & E and speak to the onsite mental health team.

Endometriosis





Bathgate and Linlithgow MP Kirsteen Sullivan wants the government to act on the chronic condition endometriosis. A roundtable in Bathgate was organised for this condition which affects 1 in 10 women in Scotland. Unfortunately, endometriosis is poorly understood. Many women and girls find it difficult to access treatment and support with some waiting nearly 9 years for a diagnosis. The condition affects every part of a women's/girls lives such as education, work and impacting on fertility. There was a wide variety of organisations involved in the roundtable, including Endometriosis UK, Nicola's, and West Lothian African women's network. Women shared their stories of living with endometriosis and described the different treatments that were offered. They described chronic pain and constant waiting to be seen. There was the feeling that endometriosis is often overlooked, and action is desperately needed. Ms Sullivan is now demanding that the Scottish Government act to reduce diagnosis waiting times, improve treatment and care and ensure that young people in schools learn about the condition. In addition, in the workplace, policies need to be put in place which are sympathetic towards employees with endometriosis.

Investment in General practice

Patients will now be able to see their GPs much more quickly due to extra funding of over ½ billion pounds over the next 3yrs announced by the Scottish Government. There will also be and increase in recruitment in General practice. Fiona Hyslop, MSP Linlithgow

has said “This substantial investment in core GP services will transform access for patients, creating more appointment availability and supporting a major recruitment drive starting next year. This record funding should reassure GPs, Practice staff, and patients in West Lothian that services will see a massive change, ensuring more face to face appointments, with those who need to see a GP seen faster and more efficiently than ever before.”

Benefits/Finance

Energy bill support



The British gas energy trust is providing support with energy bills this winter. Households can get up to £2,000 through the trusts energy support fund. The trust has another fund, the Individuals and families fund (IAF) which can give people up to £1,700 to people with a pre-payment meter. It does not matter what energy supplier you are with. If your supplier doesn’t have its own scheme or your application to a scheme has been unsuccessful you should apply to the IAF. Many households in the UK are struggling to pay for their energy due to the increased cost of living. To qualify for the support described here you must live in Scotland, England or Wales and have received advice regarding paying for your energy in the last 6 months. You need to be looking to clear any debt on your energy account. Full information is available on how to apply can be found on the British Gas Energy Trust website. Nearly £1 million in extra support has been made available to expand services relating to energy debt. The West Lothian Advice shop works with local people to manage their energy debt and aims to support people who are struggling with the cost of living.

Energy efficiency scheme



Scots have been informed to get help from an energy efficiency scheme to get free support to reduce their heating bills. It is called the Scottish Government's warmer homes Scotland scheme. This programme provides funding for wall insulation, draught proofing, renewables and central heating including new air source heat pumps or gas boilers. Warmworks manages the scheme and has benefited 50,000 households since starting in 2015. The average household will save £350 and a total of £17.5 million savings in bills. The scheme has received an additional £20 million helping lift families out of fuel poverty. Many people have to choose between buying basics such as food and heating their homes. You can apply for help on behalf of a neighbour, friend or relative. Indeed, a young person's education is affected if they live in a cold, damp home.

For advice people should call Home energy Scotland's free advice line on 0808 808 2282

Attendance allowance ending



Attendance allowance payments issued by the DWP will end before the end of December for Scottish pensioners. The Pension age disability payment (PADP) will be replacing Attendance allowance for all 155,210 existing claimants. Everyone should by now have received a letter about the transfer. If not, you need to contact Social Security Scotland (SSS) on 0800 182 2222 or webchat is available Monday-Friday 8am-5pm. At the end of July this year SSS indicated that 44,885 people over 66 years were receiving PADP. Processing times for new claims for PADP is 7 working days. For those with a terminal illness it is two working days. For complex cases however it could take longer. Pensioners with a disability, long term illness or health condition could qualify for the lower rate award of £73.90 if they require help through the day or night. Those requiring help during the day or night or if they are terminally ill could get a higher rate of £110.40. Main conditions that provide support to elderly across the UK include Arthritis, Back pain, Asthma, Multiple sclerosis, Diabetes, Psychosis or Dementia. Guidance is available on www.mygov.scot and gives full details on who can claim, how to claim and additional help available. Note, you cannot get PADP and Attendance allowance at the same time. PADP is the same award as Attendance allowance. You can check if PADP has opened in your area, visit www.mygov.scot The independent advocacy service Voiceability offers free help for disabled people applying for devolved benefits.

Call 0300 303 1660 (free) or visit www.voiceability.org

Email: helpline@voiceability.org

Christmas bonus payment



Thousands of people on benefits will receive a Christmas bonus from the DWP this winter. This £10 is an automatic payment before Christmas. You need to be claiming certain benefits to qualify. If you get Universal credit by itself, you will not receive the payment. Usually, the payment is paid in the first full week of December. On your bank statement it will show as “XB” or “DWP XB.” If you are receiving certain benefits in the first week of December, you will qualify. These benefits include Adult Disability Payment, Carer support payment, Child disability payment, Pension age disability payment, and Pension credit. If couples both receive one of the qualifying benefits each will receive the bonus. No current plans have been made to increase the payment. This year most DWP payments will be made on Thursday 25th December or Boxing day which is Friday 26th December should be paid on Christmas eve (Wednesday 24th December) instead.

School clothing grant



The school clothing grant has returned this year and officially opened in October. It is there to support families to buy school clothing items. This is vitally important as the cost of living increases. Pupils in Scotland can receive £120 for primary and up to £150 for secondary school. It is there to pay for shirts, blazers, skirts, trousers, ties, and PE kits. No student will be left behind due to them not having proper clothing. If you have more than one child, you can apply for grants for each child. At the moment the cost of a full school uniform is between £150 to £300 per child. This is conservative as branded clothing may cost even more. Children who benefit will have improved participation and attendance. Applications for the school clothing grant in Scotland are managed through the MyGov.Scot portal with standardised eligibility and payment terms across councils. Some councils are exploring other options such as recycled uniform programmes, voucher systems and expanded eligibility criteria.

Pension credit



There is a new DWP trial to encourage nearly one million pensioners to claim £4,300 income boost through Pension credit. The award can be worth over £100 a week. There is still one million people in the UK of state pension age who are eligible for this top up. Pension Credit also qualifies people for other financial help such as help with energy bills, housing costs, council tax, and free TV licences for those aged 75 and over. In Scotland a third of eligible pensioners have not yet claimed. This totals around £150 million pounds

Average amounts for Pension credit are £114.99 for a couple, £78.23 for an individual pensioner and £82.71 on average. This provides extra support for struggling pensioners. The new trial will involve contacting eligible pensioners who are not claiming Pension credit and encouraging them to make a claim. The government also supports pensioners by simplifying the application process for housing benefit and Pension credit as well as via the triple lock which means that the yearly state pension will increase by up to £1,900 over this parliament.

How Pension credit helps the elderly save.

It can help with housing costs

People may get a local Council tax Reduction

People may get the Warm home discount

Help with dental treatment

Help with transport if you are attending hospital appointments

Over 75s who receive Pension credit qualify for a free TV license. To check your eligibility for Pension credit you can use the online Pension credit calculator at GOV.UK. Pensioners can also contact the Pension credit helpline to make a claim on 0800 99 1234. Lines are open 8am to 6pm Monday-Friday. For help and advice, you can contact West Lothians Advice shop, The Citizens advice bureau, or Age UK. Full information is available on the GOV.UK website including who can claim the benefit and how much you could get.





UK Government

PENSION CREDIT

How do I apply?

Pension Credit could give you around £3,900 a year to help with your living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income.



Find out more and get started.

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE

Local News

Cyrenians OPAL



COZY UP FOR A CAUSE!
HAND-KNITTED HATS AVAILABLE NOW

WHERE: OPAL HUB, 27 GEORGE STREET, BATHGATE, EH48 1PG

Stay warm this season with a lovingly hand-knitted hat — perfect for chilly days and even better knowing you're supporting a good cause.

Every donation helps support OPAL

Suggested Donation: £5.00 – £10.00

Great as gifts or a treat for yourself!

Grab yours today while supplies last!

Cyrenians OPAL

Contact us on 01506 815 815 or opal@cyrenians.scot

Warm welcome locations



Warm welcome locations are available in West Lothian. These include community centres, libraries, churches, and other venues. They provide a warm place to “heat, meet and greet.” There is an online map provided on the “help with costs” online hub. You can therefore find a space close to you. The warm welcome campaign website has a search function which also helps you find local spaces, including information on opening times and activities. Specific examples of warm spaces include East Calder Parish church, Polkemmet country park’s visitor centre, and various hotels, including the Best Western Hilcroft hotel. In addition, there is the Gleneagles hotel and Macdonald Houston house hotel that offers a warm welcome and hospitality. Almond valley is a popular attraction featuring farm animals. Some locations are provided by the council, and others are provided by voluntary organisations. Be aware that some locations may differ in the services they provide and their opening times. You may need to pay a small donation or fee so you should check before travelling.

Respite care closure



Sunndach provides residential and short-term respite care for children and young people who have complex medical needs or disabilities. This vital service has been under review for the past two years and is under threat from closure. Currently out of area referrals have been stopped with 8 children being referred unsuccessfully. Sunndach offers a 24 hour service and provide end-of-life care and works in partnership with the children’s palliative care team. There is a sensory room and a garden with a sensory area. At this point no decisions have been made on the future of the facility. NHS Lothian who is reviewing the service wants to make sure it remains sustainable and efficient.



Feature organisations

Spark

The Craigshill charity Spark was previously called the Craigshill Good Neighbour Network. It was set up to help people who settled in Craigshill from Glasgow and Edinburgh. It gives people the opportunity to meet others and share skills and experiences. They help people to thrive and live the life that they want. The charity is for everyone regardless of background.

Spark are currently looking for volunteers to help with befriending, making teas/coffees, Activities, Admin, Bingo caller, Reception, Spark creations shop. To find out more email: kirsty@sparkscot.com or phone on 01506 442093. They are based at 2 Almondbank, the mall, Livingston EH54 5EJ.





Next step dance



Next step dance has partnered with showtime Circus West Lothian to offer new children's circus classes. You can book a free trial class (There is a link on the website) and find schedules for various locations including Carmondean centre, Polbeth community hub and uphall community centre through the Showtime circus page on Pebble Activities. So, you can visit the Pebble activities Facebook page to view class details and age group information. A variety of classes are offered including aerial loop, silks, trapeze, juggling and more. Classes are available for 3-5 yr olds, up to teenagers and adults. If you have any questions, you can call 07850 089491 or email westlothian@showtimecircus.co.uk

Smile counselling

Smile counselling was established in 2015 and aims to provide affordable counselling for children and young people in West Lothian. It offers clients one-to-one counselling, group support, and psychoeducation. This service provides a safe and secure space for counselling for 11-26 year olds. It offers up to 12 sessions for an agreed, affordable price. For more information on how to refer someone visit the website and click the "make a referral" button. To speak to someone, you can email the team leader who will call you at an agreed time. Contact referrals@smilecounselling.org.uk.

Smile counselling service is available within secondary schools. It offers 1 to 1 counselling, drop-in sessions, Psychoeducational and therapeutic groups, Teacher support/consultations, Parent and family meetings/workshops, school staff training. For details of school services contact schools@smilecounselling.org.uk.

Smile counselling offers mental health training. Qualifications provided include COSCA certificate in Counselling skills, suicide intervention and Prevention (ASIST), SQA certified mental wellbeing and health (MWAH)course. Mental health training aims to build resilient people and supportive communities. For more information you can contact training services at training@smilecounselling.org.uk .

For all other enquiries contact info@smilecounselling.org.uk

You can visit the website at www.smilecounselling.org.uk or call 01506 239 290.



Aspire autism service



Aspire offers a service created by autistic young people for autistic young people. It is for young people aged 12-18 years old who live in West Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk or nearby who find school challenging. A diagnosis of autism is not required. The service focuses on a young person's mental health, wellbeing, alternative learning, life skills, and skill development. A wide range of activities and workshops are on offer, including crafts, baking, animal therapy, gaming, music, science experiments, film making, self-defence, outings and more. There is a sensory room and loads of technology such as a 3D printer, cameras, laptops, drones and more. Young people get structure and a chance to develop new skills and grow as a result.

The service is based in Livingston Monday-Thursday 12.30-3pm and Friday 12-2.30pm. If you are interested visit the hub at https://www.diversified.org.uk/pages/our-services

Voluntary sector Gateway

Become a Companion Volunteer with Marie Curie in West Lothian

Marie Curie is looking for compassionate individuals across West Lothian to join its team of **Companion Volunteers**, offering emotional and practical support to people in their final year of life within their own communities.

Companion Volunteers provide comfort and companionship to those living with terminal illness — whether through friendly conversation, a listening ear, or simply being a reassuring presence. Their support helps ensure that no one in West Lothian faces the end of life alone.

As part of Marie Curie's **Companion Service**, volunteers are matched with people in their local area, making a meaningful difference close to home. Full training and ongoing support are provided, and no previous care experience is needed — just kindness, empathy, and a willingness to help others.

To find out more or express interest, email companionscotland@mariecurie.org.uk





Have Your Say: Future of Health and Social Care Services in West Lothian

The **West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)** has launched an important public consultation to help shape the future of **Adult Health, Social Work, and Social Care services** in West Lothian.

The consultation aims to gather views from key stakeholders, staff, unpaid carers, service users, and the wider public on the challenges facing local health and care services — and how they can be delivered sustainably in the years ahead.

Survey closes: *Noon on Tuesday 9th December 2025*

Take part in the consultation:
Help shape the future of health and social care services in West Lothian – HSCP Website

Paper copies are available on request by emailing **diane.stewart3@nhs.scot**.

Your voice matters — this is your opportunity to help influence the design and delivery of future health and social care services in West Lothian.

Events

Christmas at the Botanics

Christmas at the Botanics is a magical after-dark trail for everyone. There are amazing light installations and sparkling displays from a variety of international artists. Seasonal food and drink is available including hot chocolate and spiced winter warmers. On particular evenings there is off-peak pricing and there are also reduced family tickets. It is recommended that you book early to get the date and time that is best for you.

The Royal Botanic garden is a charity and any money raised from this event will go towards vital conservation work. Christmas at the Botanics is from Thursday 20th November till Tuesday 30 December 2025. There is quiet access for visitors with disabilities who appreciate a calmer experience and limited visitor numbers. This runs from Sunday 30th November to Wednesday 10th December 2025. To access more information and book tickets visit www.rbge.org.uk/whats-on/christmas-at-the-botanics-2025



Glasgow Christmas market

The Christmas market at St. Enochs square started on November 6th. It runs from 12-9pm every day. It is full of attractions suitable for families. On Friday November 21st there will also be a winter wonderland at Glasgow green (as George square remains closed). A new attraction is the solar powered observation wheel (with disabled access). Children can enjoy the carousel and flying balloons. There is also a photobooth snow globe. You will be able to shop for bespoke gifts. In addition, you will be able to enjoy food and drink, including traditional Bavarian sausages, Dutch pancakes, and churros. St. Enochs square the winter wonderland is open until Wednesday 24th December, Sunday-Thursday 12-9pm and Friday and Saturday 10 till 10pm. On Christmas eve the event will close at 8pm.



Winter wonderland Edinburgh

This year the winter wonderland in Edinburgh is open from November 15th- January 6th. It is taking place in East Princes street gardens and is one of the best in the world. It has funfair rides, ice rink and much more, including chalets selling gifts and trinkets and treats such as hot chocolate to doughnuts. There will also be spectacular live outdoor events. More information is available on Edinburgh's Christmas website. Visit https://edwinterfest.com/edinburgh-christmas



Tocatta Ladies choir

Tocatta ladies choir. For more details visit the website at www.tocattaladieschoir.co.uk

There will be traditional festive music and contemporary favourites.







Livingston Designer outlet Christmas activities



Santa's grotto will be making a comeback this year in Livingston Designer Outlet. Visitors will be welcomed on weekends from November 15th until Black Friday then it will be open every day, except from Monday's until Christmas eve. In advance you can let Santa know your child's name and ideal present in advance. Tickets cost £7.50. There will also be a giant snow globe, which fits up to eight people. This is located next to Starbucks, and you can be sure to get the perfect festive snap. Also, this year is the return of the winter market open from November 13th to 16th and December 18th to 21st. There will be a variety of stalls showing unique handcrafted goods, bringing together local artisans and craftmanship. Also back this year is the giving tree which will be supporting local children in need. It is located next to guest services, and you can pick up a tag and buy a gift to aged 16 years and place it in the donation box next to the tree to help those in need.

To book the Grotto visit and the snow globe visit https://santabooker.com/livingston.html



Useful contacts

Advice shop
Tel: 01506 283000
Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk

Age UK
Tel: 0800 678 1602
Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Aspire
Tel: 01506 431 695
Website: www.diversified.org.uk

Breathing Space
Tel: 0800 83 85 87
Website: www.breathingspace.scot

British Gas energy trust
Tel: 0121 321 1324
Website: https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk

Christmas at the Botanics
Tel: 0131 248 2909
www.rbge.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau
Tel: 01506 432 977
Website: www.cabwestlothian.org.uk



Cyrenians OPAL
Tel: 01506 815 815
Website: https://cyrenians.scot
Email: opal@cyrenians.scot

West Lothian Council
Tel: 01506 280000
Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk
Email: customerservice@westlothian.gov.uk

Home energy Scotland
Tel: 0808 808 2282
Website: www.homeenergyscotland.org/winter

Howden Park Centre
Tel: 01506 340 700
Website: www.howdenparkcentre.co.uk
Email: boxoffice@reconnectcharity.com

Next step dance
Tel: 07850 089491
Website: https://www.showtimecircus.co.uk
Email: westlothian@showtimecircus.co.uk

River Kids
Tel: 01506 412672
Website: www.riverkids.org.uk
Email: admin@riverkids.org.uk

Samaritans
Tel: 116 123(free)
Website: www.samaritans.org
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Smile counselling
Tel: 01506 239 290
Website: www.smilecounselling.org.uk
Email: info@smilecounselling.org.uk

Spark
Tel: 01506 442093
Website: https://www.sparkscot.com
Email: kirsty@sparkscot.com

Sunndach respite care
Tel: 01506 463 706
Website: https://children.nhslothian.scot/community-services/

Voiceability
Tel: 0300 303 1660
Website: www.voiceability.org
Email: helpline.scotland@voiceability.org

Voluntary sector gateway
Tel: 01506 650111
Website: www.voluntarysectorgateway.org
Email: vsg@vsgwl.org

West Lothian's African women's Network
Website: https://africanwomennet.org
Email: susan.gordon@westlothian.gov.uk

Westspace West Lothian
Website: www.westspace.org.uk
Email: westspace@health-in-mind.org.uk

