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L-R: Chairperson, Cllr Philip Campbell, Carol Fitzsimons, CEO Youth Enterprise NI, Zak Rendall, Krystian Biedrzycki, Noa McLaughlin, Anna Cochrane, Deputy Principal Mr C Rice.

Enterprise Week 2025

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, in partnership with Newry and Mourne Co-operative and Enterprise Agency and Down Business Centre, are excited to announce the launch of NMD Enterprise Week 2025.

This year's global theme, 'Together We Build,' will focus on collaboration, community and collective growth highlighting how working together can strengthen local economies, spark innovation and build a more sustainable future for all.

NMD Enterprise Week will take place from Monday 17 November to Friday 21 November 2025 and will feature a dynamic programme of workshops, seminars and networking events to inspire and empower entrepreneurs and business owners throughout the district. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from industry leaders, share

experiences with peers and access tailored advice on starting, growing and scaling their businesses.

Aimed at both social enterprises and businesses, the initiative will also showcase local success stories and provide access to a strong network of experienced advisors, support programmes and collaborative opportunities.

To ensure accessibility, all events are free of charge and will be delivered both in-person and online. To view the full programme of events, please visit: www.newrymournedown.org/enterpriseweek2025 and follow the hashtag #NMDEW2025.

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LOCAL SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE WITH YOUTH ENTERPRISE NI

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is delighted to announce its support for Young Enterprise Northern Ireland's Building Aspirations Programme.

With financial backing from the Council, Go Succeed and the James Kane Foundation, this partnership will give thousands of young people throughout the district access to vital entrepreneurship, financial capability and work-readiness skills. Over 3,000 post-

primary students from schools across Newry, Mourne and Down will take part in interactive and inspiring education programmes. Delivered by Youth Enterprise NI, the initiative is designed to help young people manage money effectively, prepare for future career

pathways and develop entrepreneurial skills by setting up and running their own businesses, gaining valuable hands-on experience along the way. The Building Aspirations Programme complements the Council's ongoing commitment to supporting young people through

initiatives such as Go Succeed and the Labour Market Partnership, both of which focus on enhancing employability and entrepreneurship opportunities across the district.

Continued on page 4

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Excellence in Innovation for Art Student Joe

An art and design student has been recognised for excellence in innovation in project based learning by the SERC Enterprise Team, for the research and innovation which went into his final year project work.

Joe Hughes (25), from Ardglass, studied on both the Level 2 and the Level 3 in Art and Design before progressing to the Foundation Diploma in Art & Design which he completed with Distinction at SERC's Downpatrick Campus in June this year.

Speaking about his journey at SERC Joe said, "I was 18 when I joined the Level 2 Art and Design course at SERC. I was the oldest in the class but that didn't matter, we were all learning something new and I loved every minute. I wish I could go back and repeat all the courses I did at college; they were that good. The resources were amazing, and the lecturers were fantastic – so skilled and inspiring.

"When I started, I initially wanted to go into illustration or concept art, but I changed direction along the way. I think the emergence of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the discipline made me rethink what I wanted to do - so I moved into



(L-R) Art and Design Lecturer, Charles Walsh, Joe Hughes and Natasha Lloyd, Senior Innovation Advisor, SERC.

sculpture.

Everything that I did for my final project using epoxy resin was self-taught. I did a lot of research and experiments and even rescued an old fridge in the process to help me get the desired results when working with the epoxy resin and the silicone. All the extra work paid off as I gained a distinction."

Asked about his

next steps Joe said, "I had planned to go to university but have reconsidered it for now, given the cost. I haven't ruled it out, but right now I am working in retail, and I am continuing with my sculpturing in my own time. There is always something new to learn - I guess that was instilled in me through the art and design courses at SERC,

learning never stops. The whole environment at the college fostered innovation and expanded my interests in all aspects of art and design."

Joe is currently receiving mentoring from the Enterprise Team to help him explore developing his work for market.

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ST LOUIS GRAMMAR SCHOOL, KILKEEL WINS DRAGONS' DEN-STYLE LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK CHALLENGE

Eleven local schools stepped into the Council Chamber at the Downshire Civic Centre recently to take part in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Dragons' Den-style initiative for Local Democracy Week.

Students were invited to present a Notice of Motion - a proposal on an issue they would like debated by Council - directly to a judging panel made up of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor

Philip Campbell, alongside members of Newry Mourne & Down Youth Voice and the Council's Women's Working Group.

After a series of impressive pitches covering issues from diversity and education to environmental

protection and community facilities, the winning team was announced as St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel for their proposal that young people should be better prepared before voting at 18. Their motion will now go forward to be debated at a future full Council meeting.

Chairperson, Councillor Philip Campbell said, "The creativity, confidence and passion shown by all of the students was truly inspiring. Each Notice of Motion reflected issues that matter deeply to our young people, from protecting the environment, celebrating unity and diversity to improving community facilities. Congratulations to St Louis Grammar School on their winning idea,

which demonstrated both vision and real impact. I look forward to seeing their proposal brought before the Council for debate. My theme this year is 'empowering young people', and today's event has been a powerful reminder of why it is so important to give young people a platform and ensure their voices are heard in local democracy."

Other proposals presented on the day included:

- A "Unity in Diversity" youth celebration event (Blackwater Integrated College)
- Building a multi-activity complex for youth aged 10-16 in Kilkeel area (Kilkeel High School)
- Reinstating fountains in Newry Canal and investing

in eco-friendly litter removal (Newry High School)

- Reducing single-use plastics (Newtownhamilton High School)
- Tackling violence against women through education (Our Lady's Grammar School)
- A joint university and school leavers information event (Sacred Heart Grammar School)
- Enhancing diversity in the community through language and education (St Malachy's High School)
- Developing a shared community space in Crossgar (St Colmcille's High School)
- Expanding recreational facilities for teenagers outside traditional sports (St Joseph's Boys' High School)



- Increasing funding for women's hostels across the district (Shimna Integrated College)

is a Europe-wide initiative that highlights how councils work and encourages young people to engage in local decision-making.

For more information on Local Democracy Week, visit: www.newrymournedown.org/local-democracy-week

Down County Museum Awarded National Museum Accreditation

Down County Museum has been awarded Museum Accreditation status by the Northern Ireland Museums Council, a recognition that places the museum alongside the best in the UK and Ireland for professional standards, excellence in collections care and outstanding public service.

This achievement now means that both of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's museums—Down

County Museum in Downpatrick and Newry and Mourne Museum at Bagenal's Castle—are accredited

under the UK-wide scheme, reflecting the Council's strong commitment to preserving and promoting the district's rich heritage.

The Accreditation certificate was formally presented to Down County Museum by Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons MLA, during a ceremony at Cultra Manor. Welcoming

the news, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Philip Campbell said, "This is a proud moment for our district. With both of our museums nationally accredited, residents and visitors alike can be assured they are experiencing heritage attractions that meet the highest standards. Our museums



play a vital role in telling the story of our people and place and this recognition is a tribute to the dedicated staff and volunteers who bring that history to life every day."

Commenting on the award, Museum Curator, Dr Kris Reid, said, "Accreditation is a significant recognition of the hard work and dedication of our team. It demonstrates that Down County Museum operates to the highest national standards and that we are committed to preserving and

sharing our rich heritage for future generations. Above all else, we are a museum for the people of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and we endeavour to serve the community to the highest standard."

The presentation also provided an opportunity to celebrate the invaluable contribution of museum staff, volunteers and supporters who continue to make Down County Museum a vibrant and engaging cultural hub for the local community and beyond.

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Good Relations event Showcased Community Spirit

NMDDC hosted a Celebration of Good Relations event at the Canal Court Hotel, Newry recently highlighting the creativity and commitment of local groups supported through the Council’s Good Relations Financial Assistance Scheme.

The evening brought together community and voluntary organisations, funders and partners for a panel discussion and cultural performances. Attendees also had the chance to connect directly with funding bodies, including the Community Relations Council, the Central Good Relations Fund and the Council’s Grants and Funding Team, to explore opportunities for future projects.

Paying tribute to the work of local groups and individuals, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Philip Campbell said, “We were delighted to host this Celebration of Good Relations event. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the positive work that is ongoing throughout Newry, Mourne and Down and celebrate the work of groups and individuals who dedicate their time to bringing



the people of our district together.”

The event featured a keynote address from Peter Osborne, former Chair of the Community Relations Council, who has played a leading role in civil and peacebuilding developments across Northern Ireland.

A panel discussion with representatives from The Respect Project, Newry, The Schomberg Society, Kilkeel and Youth Initiatives, Downpatrick shared inspiring stories of fostering good relations at a grassroots level. Audiences were also treated to performances by Kirknarra School of Dance, Kilkeel and St Joseph’s Pipe Band, Glasdrummond, celebrating the district’s cultural richness and diversity. Their performances showcased the creativity of local communities and demonstrated how arts and culture can play a powerful role in connecting people.

The Celebration formed part of Good Relations Week 2025 which ran recently, a region-wide initiative co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council and supported by The Executive Office under the Together: Building a United Community strategy.

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Over 150 delegates from across the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council attended the highly successful NMD Recruitment & Skills Conference on Wednesday 8 October hosted by the Broadcaster and Journalist, Mark Simpson in the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle.

This was the second of two free district-wide major conferences over a 12-month period following on from the first highly successful conference in the Canal Court Hotel, Newry last October.

Addressing recruitment

and skills shortages is one of the biggest challenges facing the local business community across Newry, Mourne and Down and it was fantastic to see so many businesses, education and training providers and policymakers in attendance at this year's conference, playing their part in helping to shape and develop a Labour Market Strategy for the district.

The conference was organised by Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade in partnership with Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

(LMP). Funded by the Department for Communities, Labour Market Partnerships create targeted employment action plans for council areas, allowing for collaboration at local and regional level to support people towards and into work. The conference was also supported by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Southern Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, Queen's University and Ulster University.

The continuing theme of the conference was, 'Meeting the District's



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Workforce Challenge' and delegates heard a mix of presentations, panel discussions and participated in interactive roundtable discussions to provide a huge quantity of valuable feedback which will be collated along with the feedback from last year's conference to develop bespoke solutions to the Workforce Challenge of the next

decade and beyond as businesses across every sector of our local economy struggle to recruit and retain staff.

The panel discussions covered three key areas including, 'Promoting Economic Inclusion and Championing Diversity in the Workplace', 'The Pathway to a Career and the NI Curriculum' and 'Attracting and Developing Talent'.



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New £1.2 Million 3G Pitch Unveiled at Donard Park

NMDDC has officially unveiled its newly redeveloped 3G sports pitch at Donard Park in Newcastle. The £1.2 million investment has transformed this site into a modern, state-of-the-art facility.

The upgrade replaces the old 2G surface with a modern 3G pitch, offering a high-quality training ground and enhancing the park's role as a community sports hub which meets the Council's multi-sports facility strategy for the Mournes area.

The upgrade allows for Associated football competitions to be played to Intermediate standard, with new seating areas for 400 spectators, significantly enhancing the experience for both players and audiences.

Donard Park 3G Pitch was delivered by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Irish FA. The project provides high-quality sporting provision for local schools and sports clubs across the Mournes area.

Education Minister Paul Givan said, "I am pleased to work in partnership with the Council to support the redevelopment of Donard Park 3G Pitch. The departmental investment of over £600,000 from Fresh Start funding will deliver state-of-the-art, inclusive



facilities which will be accessed by Shimna College through a long-term licence agreement. This project is a value for money approach that provides the school with access to high quality sports facilities, which will enable them to deliver the PE curriculum and a wide range of sporting activities for pupils."

This project was also funded by the Irish FA/DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund, which is supported by the UK Government's

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The fund is administered by the Irish FA, with delivery support from Co-operation Ireland.

Graham Fitzgerald, Irish FA Chief Operating Officer said, "We welcome this investment, which will help increase participation in sport across under-represented groups, particularly women, girls and athletes with disabilities. Donard Park 3G Pitch now provides a venue that is accessible, inclusive and fit for the future of

football in the region."

The upgrade of Donard Park 3G Pitch aligns with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Sports Facility Strategy, which prioritises partnership working to meet community needs and maximise access to funding opportunities. The new facility will not only boost participation in sport but also create social and economic benefits for Newcastle by attracting visitors, supporting local clubs and contributing to the town's overall vibrancy.

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SONYA HAS SAINTFIELD IN A SPIN!

Local Instructor Cycles to Success with 'Spin with Sonya' at The Loft

Saintfield is buzzing with energy thanks to the dedication of local fitness instructor, Sonya Dempster, who has officially launched her

own purpose-built spin studio, 'The Loft', located in the Windmill Business Centre.

What started as a passion has rapidly spun

into a thriving community. Sonya, who qualified with her I.C.I. certification in March 2023, has been coaching for over two and a half years. It was the overwhelming support and high demand from her loyal members that spurred her on to establish her own permanent base.

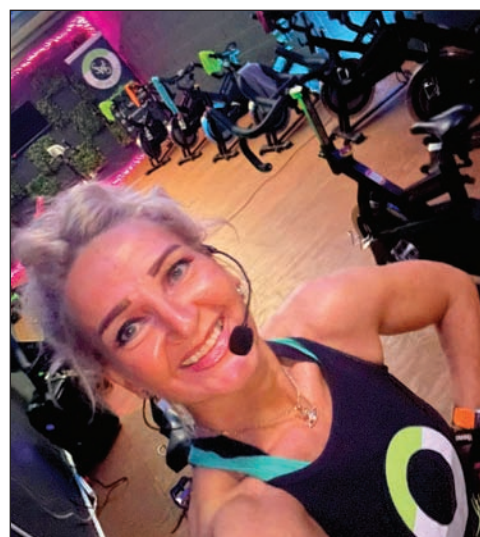
"Spin with Sonya will give you more than just exercise and wellness!" says Sonya. "You will be part of a growing Community where we lift each other up. We are truly a caring Spin Family."

More Than Just a Workout
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Loft is on inclusive, effective fitness. Sonya's 'Spinercise' classes are a quick, potent burst of energy—just 30 minutes of no-impact cardio exercise. Set to upbeat, modern music, the sessions are designed to not only raise your heart rate but also to significantly boost your mood, leaving participants feeling positive and motivated.

Sonya passionately welcomes ALL levels of fitness, encouraging everyone to take the workout at their own pace. "There is no perfection—just steady progress with each session," she stresses. A Growing Crew

In the years Sonya has been coaching, she has built an incredible membership base of returning and new



customers. For many, the classes have become a vital social hub. Her members aren't just working out;

they're bonding, with many forming life-long friendships and a strong support network. They are a "growing Crew" who

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Rising Stars Shine Bright at Hospitality Exchange

The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF), in partnership with Ulster Bank, has announced the winners of this year's Rising Stars Awards, celebrating emerging talent within Northern Ireland's hotel and hospitality industry.

The annual awards, held as part of Hospitality Exchange 2025 at the Crowne Plaza Belfast, recognise young professionals who have demonstrated outstanding skill, leadership and passion for the sector. Hosted by broadcaster Pamela Ballantine and headlined by hotel icon Alex Polizzi, the event honoured 15

outstanding individuals from across Northern Ireland.

Winners included:

Belfast
• Ronan Sharkey, Business Development Executive, Andras Hotels
• Christopher Patterson, Events Manager, Bullitt Hotel
• Shannon Coleman, Guest Experience Manager, Clayton Hotel Belfast

• Andrew Keane, Assistant Front Office Manager, Ibis Belfast City Centre
• Emma Davis, HR Executive, Maldron Hotel Belfast City
• Kamile Siauciunaite, Food & Beverage Supervisor, Maldron Hotel Belfast International Airport
• Kirill Fennelly, Great Room Supervisor, The Merchant Hotel

• Daria Chyclak, Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, voco, Belfast Derry-Londonderry
• Robyn McGarrigle, Hotel Reception & Revenue Supervisor, Bishop's Gate Hotel
• Kai Twells, Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, Everglades Hotel
• Samantha Wylie, Receptionist, Best Western Plus White Horse Hotel

Fermanagh
• Jacinta McGovern, Duty Manager, Westville Hotel Antrim
• Dara Martin, Marketing Executive, The Harbourview Hotel Down
• Skye Cook, Duty Manager, Millbrook Lodge Hotel
• Daniel Rice, Food and Beverage Supervisor, Hillyard House Hotel

Tullywest Manor is celebrating over 30 years in business!

Tullywest Manor is situated in a beautiful rural setting, overlooking the hills, lakes and farmlands of the Co. Down countryside.

It opened its doors to its first residents on 17th March 1989. The aim is to provide high quality services catering for the individual needs of each resident, ensuring that privacy, dignity and respect of each resident is maintained at all times.

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home Residents views and suggestions for social activities, outings are sought at Resident meetings and actioned if appropriate

Tullywest Manor features a large lounge, dining room, entrance hall with seating area and a spacious conservatory, where residents can circulate and meet with each other and relatives.

Each tastefully decorated bedroom, most with en-suite, offers complete privacy where residents are



encouraged to express their own personal tastes.

Tullywest recognises the need for a person-centred approach to care. Encouraging staff to learn more about the Residents lives helps us tailor our care to each individual need.

Tullywest Manor recognises that residents are individuals with family and relatives of their own

and encourage this bond to continue. They aim to create a comfortable atmosphere of homeliness and happiness and caring.

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55 YEARS IN BUSINESS CALLED FOR A BIG CELEBRATION FOR BOWMAN WINDOWS!

Many congratulations to Victor & Helen Bowman on reaching such a huge Milestone!

All the staff enjoyed a morning of lovely food, cake & some great stories shared. The management of Bowman Windows would also like to thank; The Food House Banbridge - For the amazing spread of fresh bacon baps, sandwiches, chicken goujons & cocktail sausages! The Windsor Bakery Banbridge - For the cake & traybakes (they all went down a treat!)

Karen Flowers Banbridge - For the beautifully presented flowers for Helen - to include the Bowman Windows colours Card Heaven - For the balloons including the fantastic personalised one! Digi iD - For our new uniforms with our 55 logo! And of course - Helen & Victor want to say a massive THANK YOU to all their staff & their very much valued past present & future customers!



The future for modern day Raptors

Wildlife, from tiny insects to elephants, have evolved over thousands, indeed millions of years, and yet even in the last 50 or 60 years the lives and prospects of two of our native birds of prey have changed. One is a hawk, the other a falcon.

Hawks and falcons are from the group of birds that kill other vertebrates for food, sometimes referred to as raptors (from the Latin rapio, meaning to seize or take by force) but hawks, such as the common buzzard, have broad wings and rounded tails, and are strong gliders, while falcons, such as the kestrel, have narrow, pointed wings and slender bodies, and are faster and more agile.

Buzzards became effectively extinct in Ireland more than 100 years ago, mainly through persecution and poisoning by gamekeepers, but since the 1950's, and later legal protection, have re-established themselves by flying over from Scotland and are now

commonly seen soaring on thermal currents in the sky or sitting on telegraph poles along rural roads.

Conversely, kestrels, once commonly seen hovering throughout our countryside and alongside motorways, are in serious trouble.

I'm not a scientist, merely an observer of nature, but it seems likely that habitat change and how birds feed might explain how one raptor can prosper and another decline.

Common buzzards, which nest in woodland, are raptor generalists. While they will kill small mammals, including rabbits, and birds, they are also scavengers, feeding on carrion, and can even be seen eating earthworms on ploughed fields.

On the other hand,



kestrels are birds of open countryside, mainly living off small rodents and large insects, both of which are also in decline, along with the vast scale of hedgerow... and habitat... removal over the past few decades, and the

growth in the use of poisons (rodenticides). Maybe legal protections emerged just in time to save buzzards, but radical changes in agriculture seem to be imperilling kestrels. Or possibly it's a case of the generalist, the creature

best able to adapt to a rapidly changing environment that will prosper, while specialists struggle. Time will tell... JVA

Escape to the Coast with Our Winter Warmer Package

As winter sweeps across the North Coast, The Causeway Hotel invites you to unwind with our signature Winter Warmer package with our perfect two night escape beside the world-famous Giant's Causeway.

Set against a dramatic backdrop of coastal cliffs and sea views, our historic hotel offers the ideal setting for rest and rejuvenation this season. Whether you're wrapping up for a beachside stroll, exploring the unique geology of the Causeway stones, or settling in our cosy bar with a drink in hand, The Causeway Hotel provides a timeless, peaceful retreat.

Available from £330 midweek and £350 at weekends, the package includes:

- Two nights accommodation
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- Breakfast each morning
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Guests can enjoy hearty food, coastal views, and the kind of warm Northern welcome that turns a short break into something truly memorable. The charm of our cliffside location, combined with the comfort of thoughtfully designed rooms and friendly service, makes this a winter stay to savour.

So whether you're planning a quiet couple's getaway, a mid-season recharge, or a chance to explore one of Northern Ireland's most iconic landmarks, the Winter Warmer offers a little bit of everything.

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UK'S BIGGEST FOOD COLLECTION CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO SUPPORT CHARITIES.

With food banks and charities facing continued high levels of need this winter, people are being urged to give the gift of their time to take part in the UK's biggest food donation drive.

Now in its 13th year, the Tesco Winter Food Collection is taking place in all Tesco stores from November 27th to November 29th. Tesco's charity partners, Trussell and FareShare, are calling for volunteers to sign-up to support the event in store as both charities are providing a lifeline in response to high levels of need.

During the collection Tesco customers will be encouraged to donate long-life food to support the charities in their work. Donations for Trussell will help its community of food banks provide emergency food parcels to people who cannot afford the essentials, while donations to FareShare will support its network of 8,000 local charities and community groups helping to feed people in local communities across the UK.

Volunteers will help out at collection points in Tesco stores to raise



awareness of the impact every single donation will have on people across the UK, who rely on Trussell and FareShare for food.

Donations are needed now more than ever, with one in five Trussell food parcels coming from Tesco and its customers.

Kris Gibbon Walsh, CEO at FareShare said: "Food from FareShare reaches a network of over 8,000 charities across the UK, enabling them to

provide food support alongside access to other vital services. In the winter months, many people accessing these local groups are forced to choose between keeping warm and eating. This makes the Tesco Winter Food Collection more important than ever. We know from experience that having volunteers present in store significantly increases the number of food items donated, and hope that more

people than ever will generously give up their time this year. By volunteering just three hours, people can play an important part in our mission and help create lasting change, one meal at a time."

You can sign up to volunteer in your local Tesco store with FareShare at <https://fareshare.org.uk/foodcollection/> or with Trussell at <https://www.trussell.org.uk/support-us/tesco-food-collection>

£1.1m Musical Instruments Programme

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has announced that 134 grants will be issued to individuals, bands and groups from across Northern Ireland, who have been successful in the 2025/26 Musical Instruments Programme.

The programme was open to individuals, bands and professional and non-professional performing groups to purchase new musical instruments and replace old ones.

Minister Lyons said: "Firstly I want to congratulate all the successful applicants of this year's Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Musical Instruments Programme. Music is part of our culture and it enriches our cultural experiences."

"I recognise that funding is a challenge for many individuals, bands, groups and organisations across the entire music and arts sector so I am pleased to be able to announce this funding which makes a difference across Northern Ireland."

I am delighted to see an increase in awards from 119 last year to 134 this year with increased capital investment from £823k in 2024/25 to £1.1m in 2025/26. This demonstrates the need and I will continue to support those who strive to improve the standards of musicianship in Northern Ireland.

I am also very pleased to see the spread of funding reaches all local council



Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons pictured with Ciaran Scullion, Head of Music and Opera, Arts Council, Joanne Quigley, Newry Chamber of Music, Sreehari Prakasan, drummer and members of the Cairnabana True Blues Flute band pictured at Parliament Buildings for announcement of the successful applicants of the Musical Instruments Programme.

areas." The Musical Instruments Programme is designed to help musicians in Northern Ireland replace their old, worn-out instruments and purchase new ones.

A total of 134 grants have been awarded through the Programme, which saw 94 bands (£819,405), 12 professional and non-professional performing groups (£134,928) and 28 professional musicians

(£148,667) receive funding.

The Musical Instruments Programme includes three strands:

- The Bands strand of the programme was created to support bands based in Northern Ireland, which are formally constituted, including accordion, brass, flute, pipe, wind and concert bands.

- The Professional and Non-Professional Performing Groups

category was open to choirs and orchestras, community music groups, musical societies, primary and post primary schools and youth groups.

- The third strand is for Individual Professional Musicians.

More information on the successful applicants can be found on the Arts Council NI website at <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/musical-instruments-awards>

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Direct Belfast – Glasgow Express now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station.

An award-winning service offering hassle-free travel, HANNON Coach & Sail is ideal for a city break in Glasgow and the perfect antidote to flying and airport stress! Already hugely popular with those in the know, the Belfast – Glasgow Express Coach Service is rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

A shopper's paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted 'top of the shops', the city is Scotland's premier shopping destination.

Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

With a simple flat fare of £47 which includes the cost of the ferry and your bag, the Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and low-cost



alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and

times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option for a shopping trip. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

Company director Aodh Hannon says people seem to really

love the convenience of the service as we take you right into the heart of the city centre.

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and with no extra charge for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a

break down." said Mr Hannon.

The service can be booked online at www.hannoncoach.com up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

Call 028 9265 0700 (Mon – Fri) or visit www.hannoncoach.com

JACK FROST AT THE MAC A FESTIVE FAMILY OUTING THAT MAKES THE SEASON MAGICAL

Jack Frost lands at the MAC from 26 November 2025 to 1 January 2026, and it is exactly the kind of festive family outing that makes the season magical.

Recommended for ages 5+, it is bright, brisk and packed with moments that will have little ones wide-eyed and parents smiling.

In a hidden town where the Frozen Bell should ring only once on the solstice, a second chime spells trouble. Jack teams up with Saint Nicholas, Jon the talking snowman, Hoot the owl and Neve the snow angel to face Krampus and an icy sorceress. Expect a

flurry of adventure, plenty of laughs and a simple truth at its heart. The real magic is courage, cleverness and love.

Make it a proper day out! Pair an afternoon performance with a festive lunch, hot chocolates or a Santa visit and tick the family show off the list before December gets busy. There are even relaxed performance in the run too for those who find a gentler environment helpful.

Children are £14, and babies under 12 months go free in arms. Monday to Friday, the Four or More Saver takes 10% off when you add four or more seats. If you are 16 to 24, join the MAC scheme for a £5 ticket, subject to availability.

Jack Frost runs at the MAC 26 November 2025 - 1 January 2026. You can buy tickets now at themaclive.com. Follow @themacbelfast for more festive updates.

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PRINCIPAL FUNDERS

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TEN YEARS OF AWARD-WINNING CARE FOR LOCAL HOME CARE COMPANY HOME INSTEAD

Home Instead Down & Lisburn is celebrating a major milestone this week as the award-winning home care company marks its 10th anniversary serving older adults and families across the local community.

Since opening its doors in Saintfield in 2015, the team has supported clients with thousands of hours of care each month, to continue

living independently in their own home. From companionship and personal care to specialist dementia support, every visit is designed to offer

not only practical help, but genuine connection.

Home Instead's approach is relationship-led, with minimum one-hour visits to ensure care never feels rushed. This allows time for home help, conversation, companionship, and the small details that make a big difference to someone's day.

"Our work is about far more than tasks," says Registered Manager Mahan Salgado. "It's about trust, warmth and being a steady, thoughtful presence in someone's life. We support people



Mahan Salgado is Registered Manager at Home Instead Down & Lisburn

to stay in the place they love – their own home – while remaining connected to their community, their routines and their identity."

Care Professionals are carefully matched with clients, receiving specialised training including City & Guilds accredited Dementia Care. Many families say the reassurance of having a familiar, consistent caregiver has transformed everyday life. The team is gathering this week with clients, Care

Professionals, and community partners to celebrate the anniversary with tea, cake and shared stories. The day reflected what Home Instead stands for: kindness, respect and genuine human connection.

As the team looks to the next decade, their purpose remains unchanged: to provide the quality of care we would want for our own families.

For more information, visit www.homeinstead.co.uk/down-lisburn or call 028 9560 9910.

ACADEMY PS & NURSERY UNIT, SAINTFIELD: NURTURING THE WHOLE CHILD

Academy Primary School & Nursery Unit, in Saintfield, is a child-centred, family-orientated school committed to the academic, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual development of every pupil.



Located at 194 Listooder Road, the school prides itself on fostering an inclusive, happy and supportive learning environment where every child is valued as an individual.

The school's ethos is built upon a strong focus on Pastoral Care. This supportive foundation allows children to meet—and often surpass—their educational potential. High academic standards are maintained, but the school's primary aim is the development of the 'whole child.' The

school also offers a vibrant and varied extra-curricular program to further develop teamwork, self-esteem and social skills. By instilling values like kindness, safety and respect, Academy Primary ensures its pupils are well-rounded, responsible and prepared for their future. It is our hope that when pupils leave and walk past the school gates, their hearts will be "flooded with fond memories, pride and affection."

For families considering enrolment for their child in Nursery or Primary 1 for September 2026, the school

is holding an Open Day on Tuesday 2nd of December 2025. Please call our school office on 028 9751 0407 to arrange a tour that day. If this date is unsuitable, families are encouraged to contact the school office on to arrange a personalised tour at a different date and time. This ensures that every interested family has the opportunity to experience what Academy Primary School & Nursery Unit has to offer.

For more information, you can visit the school's website at www.academyprimary.com.

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Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive Officer, North Down & Ards Women's Aid

challenging time for many families, even more so for families that live in an abusive environment. Help and support is available. North Down & Ards Women's Aid have emergency refuge accommodation and community support services available. We are open and here to help

and have been supporting women and children throughout the year.

You can directly support women and children this Christmas by donating money, gifts or vouchers to NDAWA. Please visit our website www.ndawomensaid.org for details on how to donate or phone on 028 9127 3196.

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Buying with JC Campbell means expert service, trusted advice, and access to MG's cutting-edge range—including the revolutionary new IM5 and IM6.

When it comes to choosing your next car, JC Campbell stands out as a dealership that blends local trust with national reach. Having recently moved from Rostrevor to their new home at Old Warrenpoint Road, Newry, JC Campbell is known for its customer-first approach and

automotive expertise. The team offer a seamless buying experience—from tailored finance options to attentive aftercare. Whether you're upgrading your family car or making the leap to electric, they ensure you drive away confident and informed.

The MG range continues to impress

with its affordability, reliability, and innovation. From the compact MG3 to the versatile HS, MG delivers stylish, tech-savvy vehicles that suit modern lifestyles without breaking the bank. Their electric models offer impressive range, intuitive infotainment, and smart driver-assist features—making

them ideal for both city commutes and weekend escapes.

Now, MG's new IM sub-brand is raising the bar. The IM5 saloon and IM6 SUV are premium electric vehicles designed to rival Tesla, boasting up to 440 miles of range, ultra-fast 800V charging, and advanced autonomous driving systems.

The IM5 offers sleek practicality for families, while the IM6 combines luxury and performance in a coupe-style SUV. Both models are available to order now and the team welcome you along to test drive.

JC Campbell is the ideal local choice for your next car. Pop along to see them for a coffee and a chat.

Good Food, Good Company — Senior Lunches Begin at The Vintage Rooms

There's always something special about a leisurely lunch at The Vintage Rooms at The Plough in the heart of Royal Hillsborough - and now, there's even more reason to visit.

Every Tuesday, the café is delighted to introduce the new Senior Lunch Menu launching Tuesday 11th November, offering a warm welcome, delicious food and the perfect excuse to catch up with friends.

After a gentle stroll through the charming

streets or a visit to the beautiful Castle Gardens, settle in for a relaxed lunch priced at just £15. The menu celebrates seasonal plates, with comforting dishes made from locally sourced produce - think hearty soups & pies, wholesome mains and indulgent dishes that

capture the flavours of the season.

No visit would be complete without one of The Vintage Rooms' famous homemade traybakes with a freshly brewed coffee - the ideal way to round off an afternoon well spent. Whether it's sharing stories over lunch, enjoying the

idyllic surroundings, or simply taking a little time out to catch up with friends or family, Tuesday at The Vintage Rooms promises to be a highlight of the week.

Gather your friends, make a date and enjoy the charm of Hillsborough alongside great food

and good company at The Vintage Rooms Café, located at Award Winning Plough Inn.

Find out more and view the full menu at www.theploughhillsborough.co.uk

Senior Lunch menu served every Tuesday 12-3pm, launching 11th Nov



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Victim Support NI needs new volunteers Mon-Thurs in Downpatrick court to help support victims and witnesses with information and practical help
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BELFAST CHRISTMAS MARKET 2025

Get ready to step into a winter wonderland as the Belfast Christmas Market returns to the iconic City Hall grounds in 2025!

A cherished tradition, this market transforms the heart of the city into a festive spectacle, offering a truly enchanting experience for locals and visitors alike.

When is it Happening?

The Belfast Christmas Market generally runs from mid-November right up until December 22nd or 23rd. This allows ample time to soak up the festive atmosphere, whether you're looking for unique gifts, delicious treats, or simply a dose of Christmas cheer.

What to Expect: A Feast for the Senses

Prepare yourself for an immersive sensory experience that embodies the spirit of Christmas:

- A Global Culinary Journey: One of the market's biggest draws is its incredible array of food and drink. Expect to find traditional German bratwurst, towering Yorkshire pudding wraps, French crepes, Dutch pancakes, and Spanish churros. For those with a sweet tooth, there's an abundance of fudge, chocolates, and festive pastries. And of course, no Christmas market experience is complete without a warming mug of glühwein or a pint of local craft beer.
- Unique Artisan Crafts and Gifts: Beyond the food, the market is a treasure trove of unique gifts and handcrafted goods from across Europe and beyond. Browse stalls offering bespoke jewellery, intricate wooden carvings, personalised ornaments, festive

homeware, and luxurious clothing. It's the perfect place to find that special, one-of-a-kind present that you won't find on the high street.

- Festive Ambiance and Entertainment: The City Hall grounds are beautifully adorned with twinkling lights, festive decorations, and a towering Christmas tree, creating a truly magical backdrop. Live music, carol singers, and occasional street performers often add to the vibrant atmosphere, filling the air with the sounds of the season.
- Family-Friendly Fun: The market caters to all ages. Children will delight in the sweet treats, vibrant stalls, and the general buzz. Keep an eye out for Santa's Grotto – a popular

attraction where little ones can meet Father Christmas and share their wish lists.

Making the Most of Your Visit

To ensure you have the most magical experience at the Belfast Christmas Market 2025, here are some top tips:

1. Go Early or Late (on weekdays): The market can get incredibly busy, especially on weekend evenings. If you prefer a more relaxed stroll, consider visiting on a weekday morning or early afternoon. The market generally opens around 10:00 am or 11:00 am.
2. Dress for the Weather: Belfast winters can be chilly and damp. Wrap up warm with layers, a waterproof coat, hat, gloves, and

comfortable shoes, as you'll be doing a lot of walking.

3. Bring Cash (and Card): While many vendors accept card payments, having some cash on hand can be useful for smaller purchases or if a particular stall only takes cash.
4. Plan Your Food Stops: With so many tempting options, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Take a walk around first to scope out what takes your fancy, then strategically plan your culinary journey. Don't forget to grab a festive drink to warm you up!
5. Embrace the Atmosphere: Don't just rush through. Take your time to soak in the sights, sounds, and smells. Enjoy the festive



buzz, listen to the music, and simply revel in the Christmas spirit.

6. Explore the City Hall: While you're there, take a moment to admire Belfast City Hall itself. Its stunning architecture provides a magnificent backdrop to the market.
7. Combine with Other Activities: The market is conveniently located in the city centre, making it easy to combine your visit with some Christmas shopping in Belfast's many stores or a visit to other local attractions.

The Belfast Christmas Market 2025 promises to be another unforgettable celebration of the festive season. Mark your calendars, gather your loved ones, and prepare to be enchanted by this truly magical experience!

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SLIEVE CROOB HISTORICAL TOUR

As part of Good Relations Week 2025, the Rowallane District Electoral Area (DEA) Forum organised a Historical Tour of the Slieve Croob area recently.

Over 30 participants from a range of community groups across the Rowallane area took part in the historical tour, which celebrated the area's rich shared history and cultural heritage.

Funded by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC), the tour was led by the Council's

Heritage Officer, Linda McKenna. The group explored several significant local sites, including Drumanness, Loughinisland, Castlewellan and Dundrum. Participants enjoyed learning about the industrial heritage of Drumanness Mill Town, the three historic churches at Loughinisland and the development of Castlewellan Town,

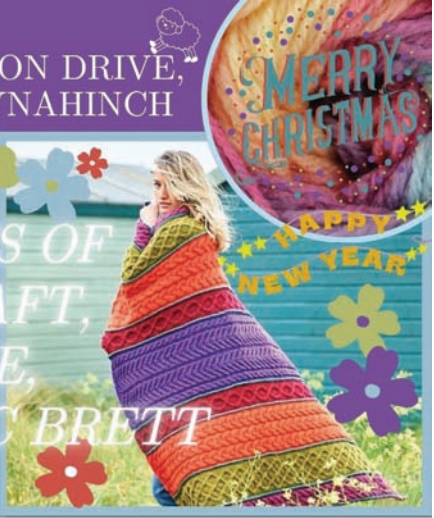




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before finishing the day with a visit to Dundrum Castle.

Rowallane DEA Forum Chairperson, Councillor Callum Bowsie said, "The Slieve Croob Historical Tour was a fantastic opportunity for local people to come together and explore the shared stories and heritage that connect our communities.

Good Relations Week provides an important platform to celebrate the diversity of our district and to strengthen the relationships that make it such a great place

to live. I would like to thank all those who took part and helped make the day such a success."

Participants also enjoyed a traditional lunch in Castlewellan Community Centre, providing time for conversation and connection among the different community groups.

The Rowallane DEA Forum continues to support initiatives that promote inclusion, shared understanding and positive community engagement throughout the district.

Ways to Get Into the Festive Mood

The Christmas season is about anticipation, warmth, and a little bit of magic. As the days tick closer to December 25th, it's the perfect time to trade the stress of the everyday for the spirit of the holidays.

If you need a spark to ignite your festive cheer, here are 10 essential activities to help you embrace the joy and make your countdown to Christmas truly memorable.

1. Curate the Perfect Holiday Soundtrack

Nothing shifts your mood faster than music. Start your countdown by creating a Christmas playlist that blends the classics, modern hits, and maybe a few sentimental favorites. Whether it's carols while you clean or upbeat tunes during a commute, let the sounds of the season become the backdrop to your month.

2. Dive Into Decoration Day

Make a dedicated day or weekend to deck the halls. Pull out the boxes of ornaments, untangle the lights, and fill your home with festive cheer. The act of decorating, especially with loved ones, is a tradition that instantly boosts the festive feeling. Don't forget to light some holiday-scented candles or use diffusers for an extra sensory layer!

3. Host a Cozy Christmas Movie Marathon

Grab a big blanket, a thermos of hot chocolate (extra marshmallows are mandatory), and settle in for a night of festive films. From the nostalgic classics to modern holiday comedies, a movie marathon is

a low-effort, high-reward way to bask in the Christmas spirit.

4. Bake Your Way to Bliss

The aromas of Christmas are just as important as the sights and sounds. Baking holiday treats—gingerbread cookies, sugar cookies, or mince pies—will fill your home with a welcoming, festive scent. Plus, you get to enjoy the delicious results (and maybe leave some for Santa).

5. Plan a Random Act of Kindness

Embody the true spirit of giving. Dedicate some time during your countdown to a random act of Christmas kindness. This could be donating a toy,

volunteering at a local charity, shoveling a neighbor's driveway, or simply leaving a generous tip for a service worker. Giving back is one of the most heartwarming parts of the season.

6. Get Lost in the Lights Bundle up, grab a hot drink, and take a drive or a walk through your local neighborhood to admire the Christmas lights. There's something undeniably magical about seeing houses transformed into sparkling winter wonderlands. Many towns also host special lighting displays or festivals—make it an annual outing!

7. Send Out Holiday Cards

Take an hour to sit down and write personalized Christmas cards. While digital messages are easy, a handwritten card arriving in the mail is a truly special gesture. It gives you a moment to reflect on the important people in your life and spread a little extra cheer.

8. Set Up a Festive Reading Nook

The darker, colder days are perfect for curling up with a good book. Create a cozy corner with twinkly lights, a soft cushion, and a stack of Christmas-themed stories or novels. Slowing down and savoring a holiday story can be a much-needed break from the seasonal hustle.

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Revitalisation and Community Spirit: The Resurgam Trust at Hilden School

The Resurgam Community Development Trust, a cornerstone of social and economic change in the Lisburn area, has successfully spearheaded a major revitalisation project, bringing the historic former Hilden Primary School back to life as a vibrant community hub.

This significant undertaking has culminated in the reopening of the beloved building, now home to Little Weavers Daycare and The Tea Room At Hilden Mill, creating both vital local services and new employment opportunities.

The B1-listed school, originally opened in 1912 to serve the children of the Hilden Mill workers, closed its doors in 2008. The campaign to save the building from dereliction and bring it back into community use was initially championed by the Hilden Community Association, a member group of the Resurgam Trust, and subsequently taken forward by the Trust in partnership with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

The completion of the approximately £2 million restoration project, supported by significant funding from sources including The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Community Ownership Fund, and the Garfield Weston Foundation, is a powerful testament to the dedication of the Resurgam Trust and the local community.

Little Weavers Daycare: A New Chapter of Learning

The beautifully restored building now hosts Little Weavers Daycare, a new social enterprise providing much-needed high-quality childcare services. As advertised in the attachment, the daycare offers a warm and caring environment, excellent facilities, creative play and learning activities, and healthy meals and outdoor fun, operating Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm. The establishment of this facility reinstates the building's original purpose as a place of learning, securing a bright future for the area's youngest residents.

The Tea Room At Hilden Mill: A Relaxing Social Space

Adding to the community offerings is The Tea Room At Hilden Mill, also a new social enterprise. The Tea Room promises to be a "relaxing social space" serving traditional homemade cakes and light bites along with high-quality local tea and coffee. With both indoor and outside seating, it offers a perfect spot for locals and visitors—including those



using the nearby Lagan Tow Path—to gather. This gathering space is set to become a valuable social asset, reinforcing the building's role as a community focal point.

Preserving Heritage, Creating Opportunity

The wider project, driven by the Resurgam Trust's ethos of regeneration, goes beyond just the new businesses. The building also includes a permanent heritage display, curated in partnership with Lisburn Museum, that shares the rich industrial and social history of Hilden Mill and

the school.

The entire undertaking has been a major success for the Resurgam Trust, creating up to 20 new jobs across the two social enterprises and demonstrating what can be achieved when community action is met with strategic partnership and investment. The reopening of the former Hilden School not only saves an important piece of local heritage but also ensures that this cherished landmark will once again be at the heart of the Hilden community for generations to come.

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**Saturday**  
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The Tea Room At Hilden Mill is a relaxing social space. Serving traditional Homemade Cakes and light bites along with high quality local Tea and Coffee. As well as indoor and outside seating, we offer a quick Grab & Go Service.

The Tea Room at Hilden Mill, Former Hilden Primary School, Bridge Street, Hilden, Lisburn, BT27 4RZ

# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR A SCHOOL OPEN DAY

A school open day is arguably the most crucial step in choosing the right educational environment for your child.

It's an opportunity to move beyond the polished prospectus and get a true, unfiltered feel for the school's daily reality. To make the most of your limited time, preparation is key. By having a set of thoughtful questions ready, you can effectively assess whether the school's ethos, environment, and academic offerings align with your family's values and your child's needs.

Gauging the Academic Environment

When you speak with teachers and academic staff, your primary focus should be on the heart of the school: the teaching and learning. Start by understanding the school's educational philosophy. Is it a traditional, lecture-based approach, or does it favour modern methods like project-based or collaborative learning? This is your chance to find out how teaching practices support different learners. Ask specifically how the school supports students at both ends of the spectrum—those who may be struggling and those who are advanced or need enrichment.

Inquire about the school's homework policy, not just how much is set, but what its purpose is for different age groups. Finally, look into the operational details of the classroom, such as the average class size and the student-to-teacher ratio, as well as the qualifications and professional development of the staff.

Understanding the

School's Culture and Vision

Your conversations with the Headteacher and Admissions staff should focus on the bigger picture: the school's culture, future direction, and student welfare. Ask the leadership to describe the overall culture and atmosphere of the school. Their response will reveal what they prioritise—be it academic rigour, emotional well-being, or community spirit. Follow up by asking about their specific approaches to promoting diversity and inclusion, and how they handle critical issues like discipline, bullying, and student safety. This shows you how they protect and nurture their student body. For long-term peace of mind, inquire about the school's vision for the next five years, including any planned facility upgrades or new educational programs. Finally, clarify the practical logistics, such as the key communication methods between parents





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and staff, and the specific details of the admissions process and timeline.

Getting the Student's Perspective

The most honest insights often come from the current students who are acting as your guides. While staff present the official narrative, students share the reality of daily life. Ask them about their favourite and least favourite parts of the school day. How accessible are the teachers if they need extra help, and what's the social scene like—is it easy to make friends and find groups to belong to? Their answers about what they do during their free time or lunch breaks will give you a sense of the extracurricular culture. For a truly authentic view, ask them one challenging question: If you could change one thing about the school, what would it be and why? This helps reveal the real pressure points or areas where students feel the school could improve.

Making the Most of the Visit

To maximise your open day, remember to prioritise your questions before hand — you simply won't have time for everything. As you move around the campus, don't just listen; observe the atmosphere. Are the students engaged and happy? Do the teachers seem passionate? And finally, take notes. Jotting down immediate impressions and key answers will be invaluable when you compare schools later. By covering the academic, cultural, and student life perspectives, you'll gather enough information to make the best decision for your child's future.



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# Alleviating flood risk around your home

Protecting your property from flood damage involves a combination of resistance (keeping water out) and resilience (reducing damage if water gets in).

Start outside by improving drainage.

Replace impermeable surfaces like concrete with permeable paving or a rain garden to allow water to soak into the ground.

Ensure your gutters, downpipes, and garden drains are clear of debris to handle heavy rainfall efficiently.

For resistance, fortify entry points. Invest in flood barriers for doors and windows, and fit covers on airbricks (some are automatic). Install non-return valves on ground-floor drains and plumbing to prevent sewage back-up from the sewer system.

For resilience, focus on internal building materials. If renovating, use water-resistant materials like ceramic or stone tiles instead of carpets on the ground floor. Raise electrical sockets, switches, and utility meters to at least 1.5 meters above floor level.

Use solid wood or stainless steel for kitchen units, as chipboard and MDF will disintegrate quickly.

These steps, combined with a robust flood plan and up-to-date insurance, provide the best defence against a rising water threat.

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# Deck the Halls... and the Hedges! Inspiring Ideas for Your Display

When it comes to Christmas lights, the possibilities are as endless as Santa's list! Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

**Classic Elegance:** For a sophisticated and timeless look, stick to warm white lights. Drape them along rooflines, window frames, and around trees and shrubs for a soft, inviting glow.

**Festive Colour Pop:** Embrace the traditional Christmas colours with red and green lights, or go for a playful multi-coloured display. These work wonderfully on evergreen trees and bushes, and can add a cheerful touch to your porch.

**Themed Displays:** Have a favourite Christmas story or character? Why not create a themed display? Think twinkling reindeer pulling a sleigh, a glowing nativity scene, or even an army of illuminated snowmen!

**Pathways and Borders:** Guide visitors to your door with illuminated pathways. Stake lights, net lights over low bushes, or even strings of lights woven through garden borders can create a welcoming and magical entrance.

**Window Wonders:** Don't forget your windows! Suction cup lights, window silhouette decorations (like stars, candles, or Santa), and even simple strings of lights draped inside can add to the outdoor magic.

**Architectural Highlights:** Draw attention to your home's best features. Wrap lights around pillars, outline gables, or drape them over prominent architectural details to create a stunning visual impact.

**Inflatable Fun:** For a truly impactful and often humorous display, consider inflatable decorations. These larger-than-life characters and scenes are sure to bring a smile to passers-by.

**The Nitty-Gritty: Electrical Practicalities and Safety First**  
Safety should always be your top priority when installing outdoor Christmas lights. Here's what to keep in mind:

**Outdoor-Rated Lights:** Always, always use lights specifically designed for outdoor use. These are built to withstand the elements and are clearly marked as such.

**Extension Cords:** Just like your lights, any extension cords used outdoors must be outdoor-rated. Ensure they are in good condition, without any frayed wires or exposed connections.

**GFCI Outlets:** Plug your outdoor lights into Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) protected outlets. These will trip and cut power if a fault occurs, preventing electric shocks. If you don't have outdoor GFCI outlets, consider using a portable GFCI unit.

**Avoid Overloading:** Don't plug too many strings of lights into one outlet or extension cord. Check the wattage recommendations on your lights and extension cords to prevent overloading and potential fire hazards.

**Secure Connections:** Keep all connections off the ground and away from puddles or snow. Use waterproof covers for connections if necessary.

**Ladder Safety:** When hanging lights, use a sturdy ladder and have someone spot you. Don't overreach, and ensure the ladder is on stable ground.

**Cable Management:** Securely fasten wires and cords to prevent tripping hazards and to keep them out of the way of lawnmowers or foot traffic. Use plastic clips, zip ties, or staple guns designed for electrical cords.

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## Newcastle Fireplaces: Black Friday Deals to warm the Heart & Home!

A new business, Newcastle Fireplaces, has now opened its doors, fast becoming a go-to destination for homeowners looking to add warmth and style to their living spaces.

The company specializes in a variety of heating solutions, including fireplaces, stoves, media walls, and electric fires. New for this winter - now supplying Dielle pellet stoves!

Call in and find massive Black Friday savings across various items in their massive Black Friday Sale from Wed 26th – Sat 29th November!

Located at Unit 12, 63A Castlewellan Road, Newcastle, BT33 0JX, the business aims to supply and fit high-quality products that meet both aesthetic and functional needs. Including a range of modern and traditional options, from sleek, freestanding stoves to classic white fireplace mantels.

For more information or inquiries, Newcastle Fireplaces can be reached at Tel: (0)77 4247 8070.

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# Transform Your Home for the Hols with The Blind Spot

The festive season is fast approaching, and as the nights draw in and the Christmas lights begin to twinkle, there's no better time to turn your house into a warm, stylish haven.

For over 30 years, The Blind Spot has been Belfast's trusted name for custom-made window coverings, and this year, they're helping you create the perfect winter sanctuary by launching a brand-new curtain department!

Founded in 1990 by manager Krystina Bradford's mum and grandfather, this family-run business has always focused on manufacturing and fitting top-notch window solutions. While they're already experts in venetian, vertical, roller, and roman blinds, their new offering allows for even more flexibility in styling your space.

Their new curtain department provides beautiful made-to-measure curtains and curtain rails, complete with a full measuring and fitting service. Whether you're dreaming of plush, thick drapes for a traditional Christmas feel or lighter, elegant fabrics to frame your windows, The Blind Spot now has every solution covered.

As the temperature drops, your windows become a crucial defence against the chill. Did you know that investing in quality blinds and shutters can significantly improve your home's thermal insulation? By choosing products from The Blind Spot, you can say goodbye to wasted heat and hello to a warmer, cozier



home this winter, saving energy while staying snug.

Beyond traditional coverings, The Blind Spot also offers innovative solutions for modern living, including:

- Motorised blinds to streamline your daily routine—perfect for those hard-to-reach windows.

- Blindscreens, manufactured in the UK, which offer total blackout and bug-free access on any window or bi-fold door, revolutionising how you manage your connection to the outdoors.

To ensure your home is perfectly dressed and ready for all your Christmas visitors, remember that made-to-measure quality

takes time. The Blind Spot takes pride in crafting every order with precision, and they can deliver and install many orders within 6 weeks.

To guarantee your new blinds, curtains, or shutters are fitted before the holidays, it is essential to place your order as soon as possible. Don't delay—get ahead of the seasonal rush to secure your installation slot!

The Blind Spot offers a free measuring service across all of Northern Ireland, ensuring a perfect fit every time. Their mission is to provide affordable prices without compromising on quality or choice. You can explore a wide range of styles, fabrics, and colours, including their beautiful

Sante Fe shutters, which can be installed in as little as six weeks.

Stop by the new showroom at 4 East Belfast Enterprise Park, Belfast BT5 4GX, to browse their extensive range and get a true sense of the quality and colour choices available.

The showroom is open throughout the week and also on Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The team is always ready to help you schedule a home appointment for a personalised quote.

Make your home vision a reality this holiday season. Call them at 028 9059 5255 or visit their website at [www.theblindspotbelfast.co.uk](http://www.theblindspotbelfast.co.uk) to get started!

# WHY WINTER COULD BE THE PERFECT TIME TO REDECORATE!

Winter is actually the ideal time to tackle a project many people put off: redecorating your home. Winter offers a unique set of advantages that make it the surprisingly best season for a home refresh.

Take advantage of Light and Texture

Winter's inherent mood is all about warmth, texture, and comfort. This gives you a natural, immediate focus for your design choices.

You can test the lighting: Unlike summer's bright, forgiving sun, winter light is low and moody. This is the perfect time to evaluate how your current paint colour and lighting fixtures truly look.

If a room feels drab on a cloudy afternoon, you know exactly what needs fixing, whether it's adding a dimmer switch, a new floor lamp, or switching to a warmer-toned bulb.

Embrace texture: Winter is the season of layers. Adding or swapping textiles—think a new faux fur throw, a velvet cushion, or a jute rug—can instantly transform a space



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without a massive overhaul. These smaller projects are satisfying and easy to complete in a weekend.

Contractors and Tradespeople Are More Available

One of the biggest headaches of a renovation project is scheduling. During the spring and summer months, contractors, painters, and other tradespeople are often booked solid with outdoor work and major renovations.

Winter, however, is typically the slow season. This means: Better availability, potentially better rates and possibly even faster project completion.

Take Advantage of Seasonal Sales

The period right after the holiday rush and leading into the new year is a goldmine for savvy shoppers. Retailers know that people are spending less, so they offer deep discounts to clear out inventory.

The "White Sale": Black Friday and January are famously good times for "white sales," offering fantastic deals on bedding, towels, and linens—essential elements for updating bedrooms and bathrooms.

Post-Holiday Clearance: Look for major markdowns on home décor, furniture, and even small appliances as stores try to move stock. A new piece of statement furniture you've had your eye on might finally be within budget.

Instead of viewing winter as a time to simply wait for spring, see it as a three-month design studio. With better contractor availability, excellent sales, and the natural desire to make your space as cosy as possible, winter is, without a doubt, the best-kept secret for transforming your home.

# NEW C5 AIRCROSS PLUG-IN HYBRID

New C5 Aircross Plug-In Hybrid is now open for orders, with prices starting from £38,855 OTR MRRP. The plug-in hybrid powertrain joins the hybrid and electric powertrains already available for customer orders.

New C5 Aircross represents Citroën's boldest step yet in the mid-sized SUV segment, offering outstanding comfort, on-board space, and value for money. Welcoming a new and bold chapter in Citroën design, New C5 Aircross range features a more assertive and aerodynamic look that enhances performance and road presence. At the front, Citroën's striking new three-point LED light signature is set within a strong horizontal structure that widens the stance, while a redesigned grille and streamlined bumper elements optimise airflow and visual impact. New C5 Aircross

delivers exceptional practicality without compromising on style. A generous 2.78m wheelbase contributes to a spacious interior feel, particularly in the second row, where passengers enjoy improved leg and headroom. The boot capacity is among the best in its class, from 651 litres (565 dm3 VDA) with the seats up to 1,985 litres (1,668 dm3 VDA) with the rear bench folded, offering the flexibility of a true family SUV. Thoughtful design touches like a wide-opening boot, split-folding rear seats, and a flat load area make loading and everyday practicality effortlessly simple. New C5 Aircross

Plug-In Hybrid features rechargeable hybrid technology, combining two energy sources: a 150hp turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine and a 125hp electric motor that powers the front wheels. Depending on driving conditions and selected modes, the engine and motor operate independently or together. In Electric mode, the vehicle runs exclusively on electric power, making it ideal for city driving and low-emission zones. In Hybrid mode, the system intelligently switches between electric and petrol power or uses both based on performance needs. When operating together, the petrol



engine and electric motor generate a peak power output of 195hp. The plug-in hybrid system features a 21kWh battery –

nearly double that of the previous generation – enabling the car to drive solely on electric propulsion for up to 53 miles (WLTP EAER

Combined). Equipped with a 7.4kW single-phase onboard charger, the battery can be fully recharged in just 2 hours and 55 minutes

using a 7.4kW AC charger. The plug-in hybrid powertrain is being launched exclusively on the MAX trim. As standard, the MAX trim comes equipped with a 360-degree camera, an extended head-up display, heated front seats and steering wheel, hands-free electric tailgate, and Drive Assist Pack 2.0 with semi-autonomous features. At the heart of the cabin is a new 13-inch 'waterfall' HD touchscreen, uniquely mounted in a vertical cascade that flows from the dashboard into the

centre console. This floating display has both fully customisable and fixed sections for quick and easy access to essential functions at all times. Along with the plug-in hybrid powertrain, New C5 Aircross is available with an electric and hybrid powertrain, offering greater choice for customers. New C5 Aircross Hybrid and e-C5 Aircross are already open for orders, with prices starting from £30,495 OTR MRRP for the hybrid and £32,565 for the electric, including the Electric Car Grant.

## DACIA SPRING: STRONGER PERFORMANCE, SAME GREAT EVERYDAY RANGE

Dacia is delivering on all the promises made for Spring, its first all-electric model, with a series of updates that include two, new, more powerful motors that offer stronger performance, without sacrificing everyday drivability or range.

A promise to make zero-emission\* mobility more affordable. Since its launch in 2021, Spring has sold more than 179,000 units in Europe (up to June 2025). In 2025, Spring performed strongly with over 17,000 vehicles sold, securing second place in the European market for electric vehicles sold in the retail channel (segments A, B, B-SUV). These results reflect the success of a car that is still the most affordable on the all-electric market, tailored to the real needs of customers.



A promise to make this all-electric model even more appealing with substantial improvements every year. Although not coming to the UK initially, Spring benefited from substantial improvements every year. These included the new Dacia identity in 2022, new more efficient 65 hp powertrain in 2023, and a major upgrade in 2024 including a fully renewed design and a

more digital experience. A promise met once again today. Spring takes a major step forwards with an enhanced driving experience, more fun, greater safety and increased versatility for everyday use. An all-rounded compact car, Spring gained a number of upgrades in 2024 to optimise performance, including: electric power steering settings retuned for increased precision and feedback, new 15-inch wheels and a new steering wheel for better grip. Today, Spring is taking this process to new levels with structural changes contributing

to a fully renewed and enhanced driving experience. The chassis houses a new battery in its reinforced central section. These changes make the structure stiffer and optimise weight distribution between front and rear to improve the overall balance of the vehicle. Braking is safer thanks to more powerful assistance. The 15-inch wheels also contribute to improving the Spring's road handling. Spring also gains an anti-roll bar for the first time, standard on all versions. The car's stability in corners is thus improved and

further enhanced by the adoption of new settings for the shock absorbers and suspension springs. \*Zero CO2 tailpipe emissions, excluding wear parts, in compliance with the WLTP certification cycle. In addition, Spring has undergone various aerodynamic improvements. A NEW POWERTRAIN RANGE FOR EVEN MORE ENJOYABLE STRESS-FREE DRIVING. Two new motors, 70 hp/52 kW and 100 hp/75 kW, replace the previous 45 hp/33 kW and 65 hp/48 kW units. These offer more power and torque between

50 and 75 mph (up to +20%). This means that Spring can travel with ease in less urban areas and fit naturally into motorway traffic for a more comfortable driving experience. Charging is optimised with a new 40 kW DC onboard charger, compared with 30 kW previously. Available on the Extreme trim level, it charges the battery from 20% to 80% in just 29 minutes.

A 7 kW AC charger is still standard on all Spring models which, combined with the new battery, allows for faster charging from 20% to 100%: 3 hours 20 minutes instead of 4 hours on a 7kW wall box, and 10 hours 11 minutes on a domestic socket. The new 70 hp powertrain is available with the Expression trim, while the new 100 hp powertrain is available with Extreme.

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# Three Ways to Make Your Home Cozy for Winter

As the days get shorter and the temperatures drop, there’s nothing better than a warm and inviting home to escape the cold.

Turning your living space into a cozy sanctuary for the winter months is all about embracing comfort, warmth, and a touch of seasonal charm. Here are three simple ways to make your home feel extra cozy this winter.

Embrace Warm Textures and Layers The quickest way to add warmth to a room is by incorporating soft, inviting textures. Think beyond the standard sofa and add layers of blankets and throws made from materials like wool, fleece, and faux fur. Drape a chunky knit blanket over the arm of your couch, pile up some plush cushions on a reading chair, and place a soft rug underfoot to add instant warmth and



comfort. Don’t forget the bedroom—layer your bedding with flannel sheets, a down duvet, and a beautiful quilt to create a true haven for chilly nights.

Play with Lighting and Scent Harsh, bright overhead lights can make a room feel cold and unwelcoming. For a coz-

ier ambiance, switch to warmer, softer lighting. Use lamps with dimmable bulbs, string up some fairy lights for a subtle glow, or, for an even more magical effect, light a few candles. The soft flicker of a flame not only adds visual warmth but can also fill your home with a delightful scent. Opt for candles with winter-themed fragrances like cinnamon, pine, vanilla, or spiced orange to engage another one of your senses and create a truly immersive cozy experience.

Bring Nature Indoors While the outdoors may be frosty, you can bring the beauty of nature inside to create a fresh and lively atmosphere.

A simple bouquet of dried flowers, a few pine cones in a bowl, or a centerpiece made from evergreen branches can add a rustic, natural element to your décor. Potted plants like a holiday cactus or a cyclamen can also thrive indoors during the winter and add a touch of green life. These natural elements not only connect you to the outdoors but also add an organic, calming feel to your space, making it feel more grounded and serene during the colder months.

By incorporating these simple tips, you can transform your home into a warm, inviting retreat that you’ll love spending time in all winter long.

# THE BEST WAYS TO PREVENT MOULD AND MOSS OUT OF DOORS

As the colder, wetter months approach, gardens become susceptible to the growth of mould and moss.

These growths not only make surfaces unsightly and slippery but can also cause damage over time. However, with some preparation and a bit of effort, you can protect your outdoor spaces.

Pre-Winter Cleaning The single most effective step you can take is a thorough clean-up before winter begins. Using a pressure washer is the quickest way to remove existing dirt, moss, and algae from hard surfaces like patios, paving, and walls. For a deeper clean, consider using a specialized outdoor cleaner or a solution of water and white vinegar. For wooden surfaces like garden furniture or sheds, a stiff brush and a wood-specific cleaner are recommended.

Ensure all surfaces are completely dry before moving to the next step. Improve Drainage and Reduce Moisture Mould and moss thrive in damp conditions. Improving drainage is a key preventative measure. Check that your gutters and downpipes are clear of debris, and ensure that water is draining away from your patio and the base of your shed. Rake leaves and sweep away other organic matter from surfaces, as they hold moisture and provide a food source for mould.



Apply Protective Sealants or Treatments Once surfaces are clean and dry, applying a protective sealant or treatment can prevent future growth. For paving and patios, a patio sealer creates a barrier that makes it harder for moss and weeds to take root. For wooden furniture and sheds, a

wood preservative or stain will repel water and protect against fungal growth. Some treatments contain biocides that actively inhibit mould and moss growth. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions carefully.

Ensure Good Air Circulation and Sunlight Exposure Mould and moss prefer shady, still environments. Pruning back overhanging branches or shrubs that shade your patio, walls, or shed will allow more sunlight and air to reach the surfaces. This helps them dry out more quickly after rain. If possible, rearrange

garden furniture so it’s not permanently in the same damp spot.

Regular Maintenance Even with all these preventative steps, regular maintenance is crucial. A simple sweep of the patio and paths a few times over the winter will help to remove any new organic debris. Keep an eye out for any new moss or mould and treat it promptly with a spot cleaner to stop it from spreading.

Following these steps will not only keep your outdoor areas looking great through the winter but will also save you time and effort come springtime.

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# The Draft-Buster Guide: Sealing Air Leaks to Keep the Cold Out

When winter winds howl, the last thing you want is that chilling breeze sneaking into your living room.

Those tiny gaps and cracks around windows and doors are silent thieves, robbing your home of warm air and dramatically increasing your heating bills. Sealing these air leaks is one of the quickest, cheapest, and most effective ways to winter proof your home.

- 1. Pinpoint Your Problem Areas Before you can fix a draft, you need to find it. An easy way to detect air leaks is to perform a “draft test” on a cool, breezy day:
  - The Hand Test: Simply hold a damp hand near the edges of all windows, around

door frames, and near any wall penetrations (like cable lines or dryer vents). If you feel a noticeable chill, you’ve found a leak.

- The Incense Test: Light a stick of incense or a thin candle and slowly move it around the frame of a window or door. If the smoke suddenly blows sideways or the flame flickers violently, cold air is entering.

2. The Solution for Fixed Gaps: Caulking Caulking is the go-to solution for sealing gaps that don’t move, such as where window frames meet the exterior siding or where trim boards

- meet the wall.
- Choose the Right Caulk: For exterior applications, use silicone or polyurethane caulk, as these are flexible, durable, and resistant to extreme temperature changes and moisture. For interior cracks, acrylic latex is easier to clean up and paint over.
  - Prep the Surface: For maximum adhesion, make sure the surface is clean, dry, and free of old, cracking caulk. You may need a utility knife to scrape away the old material.
  - Apply a Smooth Bead: Cut the caulk



tube nozzle at a angle, making a small opening. Apply steady pressure as you draw the gun along the gap, then smooth the bead

with a moistened finger or a caulking tool for a professional seal.

3. The Solution for Moving Gaps: Weatherstripping

Doors and operable windows (the ones that open) require a solution that seals the gap when they’re closed but compresses

to allow movement when they’re opened. That’s where weatherstripping comes in.

4. Temporary Fixes for Extra-Drafty Windows If you have very old or single-pane windows, caulking and weatherstripping might not be enough. For these situations, temporary measures can provide a significant boost in insulation:

- Plastic Window Film Kits: These inexpensive kits use a clear plastic film applied to the interior window frame and shrunk tight with a hairdryer. They create

a layer of still air between the window and the film, which acts as excellent insulation.

- Insulated Curtains: Heavy, thermal-backed curtains or cellular shades can be drawn at night to block the cold radiating from the glass. Remember to open them during the day to capture any solar heat! By taking a few hours to become your home’s draft-buster, you’ll ensure the heat generated by your furnace stays inside where it belongs, keeping your family comfortable and your energy bills manageable.

## Smart Heat: Maximizing Efficiency with Programmable and Smart Thermostats

As the days get shorter and the furnace starts to kick on, your home’s heating system becomes your biggest energy drain.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to lower your winter utility bills while boosting comfort isn’t an expensive replacement—it’s upgrading the brain of your heating system: the thermostat. By replacing an old manual thermostat with a programmable or, even better, a smart model, you gain granular control over your home’s temperature, ensuring you only heat the house when you need to.



- The Case for Programmable Savings. A programmable thermostat allows you to set customized heating schedules that automatically adjust the temperature throughout the day. This simple feature prevents your furnace from running unnecessarily while you’re away or asleep.
- The core principle is setback: intentionally lowering the temperature during periods of low activity.
- When You’re Away: There’s no reason to keep your house a cozy when everyone is out at work or school. Setting the temperature back by to for eight hours a day can save you up to 10% on your heating bills annually.
  - When You’re Asleep: Your body naturally lowers its core temperature overnight. A setback of to while you sleep not only saves energy but can also

promote better rest.

- The Sweet Spot: Don’t turn the heat off completely. Setting the temperature too low forces your system to work overtime to reheat the house in the morning, negating the savings. A moderate setback is far more efficient.

Stepping Up to Smart Technology. While programmable models are great, smart thermostats offer an even greater leap in efficiency, convenience, and control. These Wi-Fi-enabled devices learn your routines, monitor your HVAC system, and can be adjusted from anywhere using your phone.

Programming Tips for the Winter Season.

To get the most out of your smart or programmable thermostat, follow this simple scheduling strategy:

1. Morning Warm-Up: Set the heat to turn on about 30 minutes before you wake

up. This ensures the house is warm when you step out of bed, without wasting heat all night.

2. Daytime Setback: Program the heat to drop as soon as the last person leaves the house for work or school.

3. Evening Warm-Up: Set the heat to rise about 30–60 minutes before you arrive home. This allows the house to warm up gradually and efficiently.

4. Nighttime Setback: Program the temperature to drop once everyone is under the covers, typically around 10:00 PM.

By setting up a customized, automated heating schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat, you take the human error out of energy management. It’s an investment that pays for itself quickly through lower utility bills and provides a more consistently comfortable home all winter long.

## Why Your Boiler Needs Its Annual Check-Up Now

Before you rely on your boiler for months of consistent warmth, a comprehensive annual service is not just recommended—it’s essential.

Getting ahead of the winter rush ensures safety, efficiency, and peace of mind.

When is the best time to book your annual service?

Reasonable Notice: Most heating engineers recommend booking your service during the late summer or early autumn (August to October). This allows you to avoid the inevitable rush of emergency call-outs that begin as soon as temperatures drop (typically from November onwards).

The Winter Rush: During peak winter months, a plumber or heating engineer’s schedule fills up rapidly, often dominated by emergency repairs for broken-down systems. While you might need only a few days’ notice in summer, in winter, you could be looking at a wait of a week or more for a non-urgent service. For an annual service, aim to give your chosen professional at least 2-4 weeks’ notice in the lead-up to winter.

Boiler servicing is a routine cost of home ownership, and the price can vary based



on your location, the type of boiler, and the engineer. Based on current estimates, the average cost for a one-off annual boiler service in the UK is

typically: £80-£100 for a gas boiler and £90-£140 for an oil boiler. Crucially, never allow an unqualified person to service your boiler. Always ask to see the

engineer’s official OFTEC before work ID card (Gas Safe or begins.

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