

Get help to develop skills and gain qualifications

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No matter what stage you are at in your career, skills and qualifications will improve your chances. Find out what options are available to help you develop the skills you need.

Skills throughout your life

Employers look for skills at all levels and you can develop them throughout your life.

Whether you have just left full-time education or want to improve your current prospects, you can get the skills and qualifications you need to achieve your full potential and to support local businesses and the economy.

Options include:

How to get help

You can find out what programmes and assistance is available to improve your skills by visiting the page below:

You can chat online to a professionally-qualified careers adviser to get impartial advice about your career options:

You can also get information by telephone:

Employers can also get advice and guidance on the range of skills and training programmes available to support local companies.

More useful links

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Feedback

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[Amber warning for strong winds – information and advice](#)

There are things you can do to prepare in case your electricity goes off. There are practical steps you can take if it does.

Weather warning

A amber weather warning for strong winds has been sent out by the Met Office.

[Weather warnings](#) are sent out by the Met Office to let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

Roads information

You can get the latest updates about roads at this link:

Advice for road users

All road users are asked to pay attention to any road signs and temporary arrangements put in place during severe weather. Longer journey times or cancellations are possible as road, rail, air and ferry services are affected with the chance that some roads and bridges could close.

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

Travel advice

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

Strong winds advice

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)
- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows
- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary

After a storm you should:

- be careful not to touch any electrical/ telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging
- not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they could have been weakened

Preparing for a power cut

It's important to be prepared for a potential loss of power. You should:

- know where your household fuses and trip switches are so that you can check if the problem is with your electrics only
- test smoke alarms regularly
- keep a supply of new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins)
- keep a supply of candles
- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least
- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)
- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat

bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks to get on their Critical Care Register:

If your electricity goes off

If your electricity goes off, you should:

- check your fuses and trip switches – then check if your neighbours are without power
- leave one light on
- leave your fridge/ freezer switched on with the door shut to maintain a low temperature
- check that other electrical appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall
- preferably use a torch, oil or gas lamp as a source of light rather than candles
- if you must use naked flames, please take extra care and make certain that they are put out before you go to bed
- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

Reporting a power cut

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks Customer Helpline or visit their website:

You can find an updated list of areas affected by power cuts on the [NIE Networks website](#).

Water supply

In the event of difficulties with the water and sewerage, you will get the most up-to-date information on areas experiencing disruption on the [NI Water website](#). This includes a full postcode search facility for customers.

You can also phone Waterline 24 hours a day/ 365 days a year on:

Flooding

If any flooding happens, you can report it by phoning the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100.

There is general flooding advice in the following section:

More useful links

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[New Year honours list announced](#)

Date published: 28 December 2018

The Queen's New Year honours list of award recipients for 2019 has been published. Honours are given to people from all walks of life and all sections of society who have made a difference to their community. You can find the full list of people from Northern Ireland who have received honours on [nidirect](#).

List of recipients

Honours lists are published twice a year – at New Year and in mid-June on the Queen's official birthday.

The list, at the following link, contains a wide variety of people from different backgrounds.

Anyone can receive an award if they reach the required standard of merit or service.

There are several different types of award, each one recognising a different type of contribution.

More useful links

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Advice on cooking a turkey safely

It's important to prepare and cook your festive food safely. Every year people suffer food poisoning in December as a result of campylobacter bacteria, which is found in turkey and chicken.

Avoiding food poisoning

It's important that you handle, prepare and cook your turkey properly in order to kill campylobacter bacteria.

Christmas is a time when people often cook a bigger bird than they usually do. Nobody wants to be ill over the festive period especially with [food poisoning](#), which can have many unpleasant symptoms, such as:

- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- abdominal cramps

Top turkey tips

Remember these top tips for cooking your turkey.

Keep meat in fridge

Keep your fresh turkey and other raw poultry meat in the fridge until it's ready to use.

Make space in the fridge, try not to pack food too tightly as the cold air needs to circulate to keep all your food cool.

Keep raw foods separate from other ready-to-eat foods by putting raw meat in a covered container and placing on the bottom of the fridge to avoid cross-contamination.

Your fridge temperature should be running between 0 and 5°C.

Defrosting a frozen turkey

The time it takes to defrost a frozen turkey varies, so check the instructions on the packaging. For example, a typical large turkey weighing six to seven kg could take as much as four days to fully defrost in the fridge.

Do not defrost your turkey at room temperature.

When defrosting, leave it in the packaging (or cover and put it in a container to hold any thawing juices), then place at the bottom of the fridge

to avoid cross-contamination.

Defrost fully, otherwise your turkey may not cook evenly and harmful bacteria could survive the cooking process.

Some turkeys can be cooked from frozen if the manufacturer's instructions say so. If yours is one of these, always follow the manufacturer's advice.

Don't wash your turkey

Don't wash your turkey, or any other poultry or meat.

Washing poultry can spread germs by splashing onto cooking utensils, kitchen tops and anything else within reach – including you.

Cooking thoroughly will kill any bacteria, including campylobacter.

Cooking

Cook thoroughly and always check the retailer's instructions for cooking times, as this will vary according to the size of the turkey.

Be aware that fan-assisted ovens might cook your turkey more quickly.

To check your turkey is ready, make sure it's steaming hot all the way through. Cut into the thickest part of the turkey – none of the meat should be pink and any juices should run clear.

Cook any stuffing in a separate roasting dish, rather than inside the bird – it will cook more easily and the cooking guidelines for the turkey will be more accurate.

You will find further advice at this link:

Leftovers

Leftovers should be left to cool at room temperature, covered and placed in the fridge or freezer – ideally within one to two hours after being cooked.

Use leftovers from the fridge within two days and, if reheating, do so until steaming hot all the way through. You shouldn't reheat leftovers more than once.

Leftovers can also be frozen and used within one month. Frozen leftovers should be defrosted thoroughly in the fridge and then eaten within 24 hours.

You can also use previously cooked and frozen turkey to make a new meal, such as a turkey curry. This new meal can be frozen too, but make sure you only reheat it once.

More useful links

[Look after your mental health over the holidays](#)

Look after your mental health and that of your loved ones over the holiday period. Christmas is traditionally viewed as a time of celebration and happiness, but unfortunately for some it can also be stressful and lonely.

Tips on dealing with stress

Many of us will be looking forward to the Christmas holidays so that we can spend time with our family and friends.

However, this time of the year also brings stress, with people worrying about money, remembering the loss of a loved one, or feeling lonely.

Practical tips on dealing with stress over the festive season include:

- make time for family and friends
- go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, garden or dance – exercising makes you feel good
- stop, pause, or take a moment to look around you
- don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or set yourself a new challenge over the holidays
- don't be afraid to give and accept support – being available for others if they need support should encourage them to be there for you too

People often use [alcohol](#) to relax, but instead of helping us to cope it can make things worse. If you choose to drink, know your limits and avoid excessive or binge drinking.

You can find out more about mental health and available services at this [link](#):

Look out for the welfare of others

As well as our own, we should also look out for family members, friends and neighbours and be mindful of their mental health.

It's important to look out for behaviour that could show that someone is under pressure and really needs help.

If you're worried or concerned about someone else, talk to them. Ask them how

they are feeling and if there is anything you can do to help them.

Distress or despair

If you think someone might be in need of immediate help, find out what to do at this link:

If you or someone you know is in distress or despair, call [Lifeline](#) on:

The helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

More useful links