

Where to get help in the Coalfields area

Know your rights

Coalfield's area residents can receive a free Financial Resilience Check from Shiney Advice and Resource Project (ShARP), the council's contracted advice provider for the Coalfields area. Call 0191 385 6687 or email advice@shineyadvice.org.uk

This free service offers information, advice and guidance on welfare benefits, debt, employment, and housing matters.

Free school meals

Children may be able to receive free school meals if their parent(s)/carer(s) are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

If parent(s)/carer(s) are unsure of eligibility, they can call 0191 561 1417 or email freeschoolmeals@togetherforchildren.org.uk and one of the team will try to help.

Parent(s)/carer(s) can also check eligibility and apply online by visiting www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/parents-carers/free-school-meals

Free Healthy Start Voucher - help to buy food and milk

If a resident is more than 10 weeks pregnant or has a child under four years old, they may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk. They may be able to receive free vouchers or payments to spend on cow's milk, fruit, vegetables, and infant formula milk, as well as free vitamins, if they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

To check if they are eligible, residents can contact the Healthy Start helpline on 0345 607 6823 and an application form can be sent out in the post. Residents can also ask a midwife or health visitor for an application form.

Residents can also check eligibility, and print an application form by visiting www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Wear Here 4 You - Together for Children

Provide information, advice and support for children, young people and families in Sunderland

More details can be found at: www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/article/21147/Wear-Here-4-You



Get help and advice

Shiney Advice and Resource Project (ShARP) are the council's contracted advice provider for the Coalfields area. They offer free financial resilience checks, information, advice and guidance on welfare benefits, debt, employment, and housing matters. Please contact them on 0191 385 6687 or email: advice@shineyadvice.org.uk

Residents can also get free specialist advice from the following agencies, regardless of where they live in the city:

Specialist support provider	Support available
Sunderland Welfare Rights Service Tel: 0191 520 5555 Email: welfare.rights@sunderland.gov.uk	Specialist and complex casework service offering advice and representation in relation to: Benefits appeals and sanctions, Debt advice and Employment Law
Shelter Tel: 0808 800 4444 Web: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice	Free advice, support, and legal services to help residents who are struggling with bad housing or homelessness and issues with landlords
Money Advice and Pension Service Tel: 0800 138 7777 Emergency Helpline: 0808 164 4660 Web: www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk	Free information to help residents make the most out of their money and pensions. Information includes: Budgeting, Saving and Debt and borrowing
Illegal Money Lending Team Tel: 0300 555 2222 Email: reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk Web: www.stoploansharks.co.uk	Confidential help and advice to investigate and prosecute illegal money lenders while supporting those who have borrowed money from a loan shark
Gentoo Money Matters Teams Tel: 0300 123 2004 Email: money matters@gentoo group.com	Gentoo tenants only. Offers free money and debt advice, as well as help with benefits
Citizens Advice Sunderland (Money Advice Service Contract) Tel: 0191 415 8998	Offers free, impartial debt advice with a specialist money advice worker

Food support near you

There are several crisis food providers in your area. Providers and opening times may be subject to change. Please contact 0800 234 6084 or 0191 520 5551 for details or for them to make a referral on your behalf.

Organisation	Location	Opening times	Referral route
Bethany Centre	Hetton Road, Houghton le Spring DH5 8PF	Monday-Friday 9am–3pm	Agency referral including council Tel: 0800 234 6084 or Tel: 0191 520 5551
Loaves and Fishes	ELCAP, Easington Lane, Houghton le Spring DH5 0LE	Monday 11am–12pm	
	Hetton and Eppleton Community Hall, Office Place, Hetton DH5 9JQ	Friday 11am–12pm	
Space4	Kepier Hall, Church Street, Houghton le Spring DH4 4DN	Tuesday and Fridays 10am–12pm	
	The Hub Ground Floor, Houghton Library, Newbottle Street DH4 4AA	Monday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10am–1pm Saturday 2pm–4pm	
Sunderland Foodbank - St Johns Church	Church Street, Shiney Row DH4 7DD	Monday and Thursday 11.30am–1pm	

Sunderland City Council's local welfare provision

Crisis Support Scheme

The scheme can help residents who are unable to meet their immediate short-term needs either in an emergency, or because of a disaster, and where no other appropriate support is available. Help is provided mainly for food and fuel.

- Help with food may be provided to people in crisis who cannot access local foodbanks for specified reasons
- Help with fuel is for people in crisis who have prepayment meters (to avoid the chance of self-disconnection)

More details can be found at www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/17327/Crisis-support

The council can be contacted 24/7 to support residents who require emergency food support, call 0191 520 5551.

Community Care Support Scheme

This scheme is primarily intended to help vulnerable individuals/families to:

- Enter or re-enter the community, and/or
- Develop or maintain their independence within the community by contributing towards the cost of the key household items needed when setting up home

Help is normally provided by a contribution towards the costs of essential household items such as beds, furniture, white goods, and small household items.

More details can be found at www.sunderland.gov.uk/community-care-support

Sunderland City Council Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

If residents have a shortfall in their rent and receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with Housing Costs, they might qualify for a DHP. DHPs are meant to provide short term financial help to enable residents improve their financial, or employment circumstances or look for cheaper alternative accommodation.

For more information and a link to the application form visit www.sunderland.gov.uk/dhp

The council's Home and Money Team can also help residents to complete applications, call 0191 520 5551.



Make your money go further

Affordable credit

Most people will have been in a position at some point where they need to borrow money. There are a lot of credit options out there, but it is important to encourage people to do some research into the best option for them and their circumstances before committing to anything that might become unaffordable.

Residents can find out more about the different options available by visiting www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/credit-and-purchases/deciding-on-the-best-type-of-credit-for-you. Information is also available at www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12661/Could-you-borrow-any-better

Payday lenders and people offering doorstep loans might seem like the easy option, but residents can end up paying back a lot more than they borrowed. Some of these people might not even be authorised to lend money.

Moneywise Credit Union offers a local and ethical option for saving and lending. They offer a range of loans and interest rates, such as personal loans, family loans and saving plans, including payroll deductions. For more information visit www.sunderland.gov.uk/creditunion

If residents are worried that they've borrowed from a loan shark and would like support, they can call the Illegal Money Lending Team on 0300 555 2222 or visit www.stoploansharks.co.uk/who-we-are

Company Shop

Company Shop in Washington sells food and household brands at low prices through its member-only superstore. The discount is often up to 70%. Free membership is open to people in a wide range of jobs. However, due to Covid-19 temporary membership had been extended. To find out if you can join visit www.companysshopgroup.co.uk

Help with utility costs

Broadband

Broadband has now become an essential item for most people. Check out the best deal by visiting www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/19798/Finding-the-best-broadband-deal-for-you

Water

Northumbrian water offers a range of schemes to help and support residents which include:

- Fixing a leaking toilet for free no matter what their income
- Discount of up to 50% on their water bill if the household income is less than £16,385

For full details of all available schemes please visit www.nwl.co.uk/services/extra-support

Reducing energy costs

There are several organisations that can provide information and advice to help residents reduce their energy costs and tackle fuel bills:

- Citizens Advice Sunderland - offer free energy checks and help to reduce energy bills. Call 0191 415 8998 or email energy@citizensadviceunderland.co.uk
- Green Doctor Service - offer free practical energy or debt advice. Call 07515 327 185 or email GreenDoctorSunderland@groundwork.org.uk

Wholesale gas prices have increased significantly over recent months. Residents are also being warned that anyone coming off cheap, fixed energy deals could be in for a huge price hike, even on the cheapest tariffs. To avoid a potential price hike in energy bills customers are advised to do nothing with their energy supply and roll on to the price cap when the deal ends, rather than trying to switch. For up-to-date information visit www.moneysavingexpert.com or www.sunderland.gov.uk/reducingenergycosts

Further information

For more information, please email Sunderland City Council's Strategic Advice Services at strategic.advice.services@sunderland.gov.uk

Please note: This information was correct at the time of printing, for any changes to services, offer, or opening times please contact or visit website listed.