

Family Friend

There for you and
your family too

Support for families in Manchester



Click on the QR code or visit:
manchester.gov.uk/family-friend



Free pullout daily
diary for kids

Free cookery e-book

Access to free data
SIMs and Wi-Fi

Plus, seasonal
giveaways while
stocks last.

Contents

Welcome to Manchester’s family support offer	3
Free flu and COVID-19 vaccinations in Manchester	4
Vaccinations for children	7
Free vitamins – NHS Healthy Start.....	9
Manchester Health Visiting Service	10
Manchester’s Local Offer	11
Thinking about quitting smoking?	12
Get to know where to go	14
Four ways to help your child be confident and happy to start school	15
NHS 111	19
Childcare and early education from 9 months to 11 years	20
What families need to know about school support	22
Best Start Family Hubs	24
Food support for your family	28
Cost-of-living advice for families	29
Support groups for mums and dads	30

Welcome to Manchester's family support offer

Dear Parent or Carer,

We know that raising a family can be joyful but also challenging. Our Family Friend offer brings together support available across Manchester – from health and childcare, to food, activities and emotional wellbeing.

It's here to help you find what you need, when you need it. Whether you're looking for advice, a friendly face, or just something fun to do with your child, there's something in here for you. This booklet includes a free pull-out daily diary for kids, a free cookery e-book to download from: childfriendlymanchester.co.uk/news/recipe-book (or use the QR code below) and help to get online at Manchester libraries with free data SIMs and Wi-Fi. You can also join our Family Friend WhatsApp community group (see back cover for details) to receive the latest information direct to your mobile phone.

If you ever feel unsure or need a bit of extra help, please reach out. The services listed are here for you and your family.

Councillor Joanna Midgley

Deputy Leader, Manchester City Council

Councillor Thomas Robinson

Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care



Free flu and COVID-19 vaccinations in Manchester

Bugs like flu and COVID-19 can hit families during the winter, especially pregnant mums and kids with health conditions.

Getting vaccinated is free and helps to protect your family's health, your time, and your wallet.

See if you or your family are eligible for a free NHS COVID-19 booster or flu jab this winter.

You can get a free flu vaccination if you:

- are aged 65 or over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2026)
- have certain long-term health conditions
- are pregnant
- live in a care home
- are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system
- are a front-line health and social care worker.

The children's flu vaccination is recommended for:

- children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2025 (born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2023)
- school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
- children aged 6 months to 17 years with certain long-term health conditions.

You can get the winter COVID-19 vaccination if you:

- are aged 75 or over (including those who will be 75 by 31 January 2026)
- are aged 6 months to 74 years and have a weakened immune system because of certain health conditions or treatment
- live in a care home for older adults.

Vaccinations take about two weeks to work, so don't wait!

Why it matters

Getting flu or COVID-19 can do more than make you feel unwell – it can:

- keep you off work or school
- disrupt family plans
- cost money if you don't receive sick pay or free prescriptions.

Where to get your free jabs

- Contact your GP surgery to book an appointment.
- Visit manchester.gov.uk/getmyjab.
- For COVID-19 and flu vaccinations: find a pharmacy or walk-in clinic near you (no appointment needed), book online at nhs.uk, or use the NHS app.
- For a COVID-19 vaccination: the Care Gateway is helping those who need additional support to make an appointment, find a walk-in clinic, or access a housebound vaccination. Call 0161 947 0770 or 0800 092 4020.

The COVID-19 jab is free, and done in minutes.

Check to see if you should have it:
manchester.gov.uk/getmyjab



The flu jab is free, and done in minutes.

Check to see if you should have it:
manchester.gov.uk/getmyjab



time



money



plans



health

Vaccinations for children

One of the best ways to protect your child against diseases like measles, rubella, tetanus and meningitis is through immunisations.

By protecting your child, you also help others by stopping the spread of disease.

The NHS offers vaccinations free of charge – just book an appointment with your GP.

For more information, visit [nhs.uk/vaccinations](https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations) or download Manchester's guide to free childhood vaccinations here: manchesterlco.org/childhood-vaccinations





Measles is sooo last century

Today we have the safe, effective and free MMR vaccine. Check your child's vaccine status and book their jabs with your GP practice.

More information: manchester.gov.uk/measles

Free vitamins – NHS Healthy Start

Get free NHS Healthy Start vitamin drops for babies and young children, suitable from birth to 4th birthday, and free vitamin tablets for all pregnant women and new mums in Manchester.

You do not have to be on benefits. You can get them from Children's Centres, your health visitor, community midwife, or certain pharmacies in Manchester.

Scan the QR code below for more details.

If you are on some benefits, you can also get free healthy food and milk. Find out more and register. Ask your midwife, health visitor, or apply online: www.healthystart.nhs.uk



Manchester Health Visiting Service

Health Visiting teams are here to help you and your child. They support health and school readiness from before birth until your child is 4½ years old. Every family with a child under the age of 4½ can have a health visitor.

Health visitors see you in your home or near to where you live, or talk on the phone.

They check that you are healthy and can tell you about how your baby is doing.

They can also help with:

- feeding your baby (including breastfeeding)
- your mental health
- getting your child ready for school
- sleep
- potty training.

For more information:

manchesterlco.org/Manchester-health-visiting-service



Manchester's Local Offer

This is for families where a child or young person has a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND).

The Local Offer has activities, services and advice for those aged 0–25 with SEND (and their families).

Visit manchester.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer for information about:

- things to do (everything from autism-friendly theatre productions to disability-inclusive BMX bike sessions)
- places to go
- your legal rights
- your child's health or education
- childcare
- travel and transport
- parent support groups
- short breaks
- money (including benefits and grants)
- dates and locations of our friendly drop-in sessions (where you can chat to other parents/carers and services face to face).

You can also call the Local Offer team on **0161 219 2125**, or email localoffer@manchester.gov.uk

Thinking about quitting smoking?

You're not alone – and you don't have to do it alone.

Be Smoke Free Manchester offers free personalised support to help you quit in a way that works for you. Whether you smoke, vape, or use other tobacco products, there's no judgement – just help.

You'll get:

- one-to-one support from friendly stop smoking advisers
- free nicotine replacement products or vapes
- tailored advice to manage cravings and stress
- flexible appointments by phone, video, or in person.

Quitting can mean more energy, better health, and extra money in your pocket – all things that make family life a little easier.

Get started today by visiting:

changegrowlive.org/be-smoke-free or call **0161 823 4157**.



It's never too late to quit smoking.

For free quitting support
search 'smokefree'.

For free products,
advice and support
to help you stop
smoking for good,
**visit: [changeGrowLive.org/
be-smoke-free](https://changeGrowLive.org/be-smoke-free)**
or call: 0161 823 4157.



**Better
Health**

**Smoke
free**

Get to know where to go

If you're not sure how to get the help you need, use this checklist to guide you. More detailed information is available in many languages here: gmintegratedcare.org.uk/gtkwtg

- Ask a local **pharmacist** for advice – a pharmacist can give you advice about many common minor illnesses, such as diarrhoea, minor infections, headaches, sore throats, or travel health.
- Make an **appointment with your GP** if you're feeling unwell and it's not an emergency.
- **Call NHS 111** if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation. You can also call NHS 111 if you're not sure which NHS service you need or you need urgent help for your mental health.
- **Go to NHS 111 online** to get help for your symptoms.
- Go to a **walk-in centre, minor injuries unit or urgent treatment centre** if you have a minor illness or injury (cuts, sprains or rashes) and it cannot wait until your GP surgery is open.
- **Call 999** if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.



Four ways to help your child be confident and happy to start school



**Pull out
and keep**

1. Practical skills

Teach your child how to:

- put on/take off their shoes and coat
- use the toilet and wash their hands
- hold a crayon or pencil and draw on paper
- feed themselves and hold a cup.

2. Routines

Make sure your child:

- goes to bed at a regular time and gets 10 to 13 hours of sleep
- brushes their teeth twice a day.

3. Playing and sharing with others

Help your child to:

- play for 3 hours a day (it's fun!) and learn to share their books and toys
- understand and talk about important feelings – like feeling happy or sad
- walk up and down stairs, using the wall or banister for balance.

4. Talking

Help your child to find their voice by:

- chatting with them lots and talking while you look at picture books
- limiting screen use on mobiles and laptops
- singing nursery rhymes with them
- praying together
- making sure they recognise their name when it is said out loud and written down.

Visit your local Family Hub: mcrfamilyhubs.com or children's centre: manchester.gov.uk/childrenscentres and library: manchester.gov.uk/libraries

For children

My morning:

1

I wake up and smile!
I go to the toilet then
wash my hands.
I eat breakfast.



2

I brush my teeth.
I get dressed.
I put on my shoes
and coat.



My evening after school:

3

I eat dinner.
I talk and play
with my family.
I brush my teeth.



4

I have a bath
or shower.
I put on my pjs.
Storytime!



Time for bed.
Goodnight!

NHS 111

Use NHS 111 if you need fast medical help or urgent mental health support but it's not a 999 emergency.

Trained advisers will ask questions about your child's symptoms. They will then tell you what to do. If an appointment is needed, they can book one at the right local service. If they think you need an ambulance, they will send one immediately.

If you need to use a different language, call 111 and ask for an interpreter.

NHS 111 offers a British Sign Language (BSL) service that is open 24/7.

There are a few ways to access NHS 111:

- Online at 111.nhs.uk (the online service is intended for those aged 5 and over; If you need help for a child under 5, call 111 instead)
- In the NHS app
- By calling 111.

Note: If you have a pay-as-you-go phone, this could use a lot of your phone credit/data.



Childcare and early education from 9 months to 11 years

Our childcare offer helps parents in Manchester who are working or looking to return to work. Early learning is part of our childcare. It helps children make friends, gain confidence, and feel ready for school.

Childcare and early education from 9 months to 11 years

Working parents of children aged 9 months to 4 years

There's support with childcare costs for working parents with children aged 9 months to 4 years. Your child may be entitled to 30 hours of childcare funded by the Government if you are working and meet the criteria.

Visit beststartinlife.gov.uk to find out more and apply.

Working parents of children aged 5 years to 11 years old

Manchester has a wealth of before and after school provision for working families of primary school-aged children. Just ask at your child's school and they will provide you with information on what's provided and how much it costs.

You may get help with childcare costs if you claim Universal Credit or apply for Tax Free Childcare.

For more information, visit beststartinlife.gov.uk or manchester.gov.uk/wraparound-childcare

If you're not working and have children aged 2, 3 or 4 years

All children aged 3 and 4 years are entitled to 15 hours of early education funded by the Government; some children aged 2 years, whose family is in receipt of certain benefits, may also be entitled to 15 hours of early education.

To find out if you qualify, visit beststartinlife.org.uk or speak to the staff at your local Family Hub or Children's Centre. For more information visit manchester.gov.uk/freechildcare



HM Government



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What families need to know about school support

Free school meals and transport

Many families in Manchester qualify for free school meals and travel – but not all claim them. If you're eligible, applying takes just minutes and could save you hundreds of pounds a year.

Plus, schools receive extra funding – £1,515 for each child in primary school and £1,075 for each child in secondary school – to support learning through the Pupil Premium.

Check your eligibility online: manchester.gov.uk/family-friend or ask your child's school.

Holiday support

Families eligible for Free School Meals receive school holiday payments to help with food costs:

- £15 – October half-term
- £30 – Christmas
- £15 – February half-term

Payments are made through schools. Ask your school for details.

Health and vaccinations

Make sure your child is registered with a GP and up to date on vaccinations (including measles and whooping cough).

Visit nhs.uk/vaccinations for guidance.

School uniform help

Support is available for uniform costs:

- Ask your school about pre-loved uniform schemes or grants.
- Wood Street Mission: woodstreetmission.org.uk offers help via referral from a professional, eg. a social worker, health visitor or your GP.
- Some housing providers and trade unions offer grants
- Visit moneysavingexpert.com for deals and tips
- Unify Credit Union offers low-interest uniform loans; visit unifycu.org/uniform-loan or call 01942 245656.

If your child needs extra or different support to learn

All children with a special educational need or disability (SEND for short) are entitled to support in school if they need it. This might include extra help in class or changes to their learning environment. They don't need a diagnosis or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – the support is based simply on what they need.

If you think your child may need extra help, speak to their teacher or the school's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator).

More information: manchester.gov.uk/SEND-support

LOADS

TO

DO

IN THE

SUMMER

FREE holiday club programme for children on free school meals at

loadstodo.co.uk/schoolhols



MANCHESTER
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Helping
Hands



Best Start Family Hubs

Best Start Family Hubs are friendly places where you can find lots of support and activities for your family.

Where is my nearest Best Start Family Hub?

Clayton

101 North Road, Clayton, M11 4NE.
0161 219 6177 (Due to open early 2026.
Check the website for updates.)

Crossacres

Poundswick Lane, Wythenshawe,
M22 9TA. 0161 529 0080

Gorton Sacred Heart

Glencastle Road, Gorton, M18 7NE.
0161 245 7180

Longsight

1a Farrer Road, Longsight, M13 0QX.
0161 248 1500

Woodville

Shirley Road, Cheetham, M8 0NE.
0161 234 3000

Services are also available at
Manchester Settlement, Gorton St James
Sure Start, and St Clement's Sure Start.

Pop in or give them a call to find out what's on.
Or scan the QR code or visit mcrfamilyhubs.com



More hubs
opening
throughout
2026! Check
the website
for details





Balance your work and family life more easily with wraparound childcare.

Find out more:
beststartinlife.gov.uk



UK Government



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Do you have a space in your home and a place in your heart to foster?

manchester.gov.uk/fostering

**Have parenting experience? A spare room?
Get paid to foster.**

Fostering can mean taking a child in for a couple of nights, caring for a child for several months, or even having a child living with you for many years.

We're especially looking for people with experience of working with children and young people, including parents and grandparents. Interested?



To check if you can foster, visit manchester.gov.uk/fostering or scan the QR code here.



Food support for your family

Local food banks and community grocers can help you put food on your table to feed your family.

To find a food bank near you, visit [manchester.gov.uk/helpinghands](https://www.manchester.gov.uk/helpinghands) or call Manchester's free cost-of-living advice line on **0800 023 2692**.

The advice line is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4.30pm. Or text us on **07860 022 876**.



**Helping
Hands**



Cost-of-living advice for families

Call Manchester's free cost-of-living advice line on 0800 023 2692.

The advice line is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4.30pm. It supports Manchester residents with:

- benefits
- help with rent
- advice about debt and paying bills
- food support – help to find community food provision locally
- help to get online – support to access the internet, laptops, phones and data.

Text us on 07860 022 876 or visit manchester.gov.uk/coladvice



Support groups for mums and dads

Mums Matter

Eight-week course held at various locations in Manchester. It's designed by mums for mums, helping new mothers with kids under the age of 2.

Mums will connect and share experiences while learning different self-care tools to support their mental health and wellbeing.

For more information:

Telephone: **0161 769 5732**

Email: info@manchestermind.org

manchestermind.org/mumsmatter

Dad Matters

Dad matters to Mum, to baby, to everyone.

Dad Matters help dads from the time their baby is conceived up to the age of 2.

They help dads have successful relationships with their families by supporting them to get information and advice.

They run support groups for dads at antenatal clinics and classes. They also provide outreach for antenatal care.

Home-Start hosts Dad Matters. You can refer yourself or someone else for support here:

home-starthost.org.uk/dad-matters.



Manchester Libraries



The possibilities are endless
manchester.gov.uk/libraries

With your free library card you can:

- Use the internet and Wi-Fi for free.
- Learn to use computers.
- Do your printing and photocopying.
- Borrow a wide range of books.
- Borrow e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines and e-newspapers.
- Join reading groups and other social and fun groups.
- Attend a wide range of events for all ages.
- Get information, including business support.
- Use the library for studying, catching up with other people, or to keep warm.
- Delve into your area's local history and research your family history.
- Visit, relax and meet people.

To join the library for free, pop into your local library.
Or you can join online at

www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries



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Get Family Friend updates sent straight to your phone

Join the Family Friend WhatsApp group – a free friendly space to get:

- info on free family events and things to do
- tips on health and wellbeing
- local offers and support for you and your family.

Scan the QR code or visit manchester.gov.uk/ff-whatsapp to sign up.

