BCUSU

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Support for students over Christmas



Activities and ways to keep busy.



The Christmas period can be a different experience for different people. Some people will have a busy time and might need to think about how they make space for rest and relaxation. For others, it might be a quiet time and they will need to think about how to keep themselves occupied and entertained. Or it might be something in the middle.

Below are some ideas for activities you might want to consider:



Spend time with others:

- The Eagle & Ball pub will be closed from Friday 19 December and the Social Kitchen will be closed from Friday 12 December, both re-open on Monday 12 January 2026. They are likely to have some good deals on food and drink that you could enjoy with friends or flatmates.
- You might want to arrange some film/tv or games nights and enjoy some snacks/treats with other people.
- You could arrange to speak to or see friends that you haven't been able to during term time.

TV and film:

Why not get cosy and settle down for some festive films? As a BCU student you have free access to BOB (Box of Broadcasts) which has a wide range of television, film and radio from over several decades: **learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand**

Physical activity:

Keeping active can help your mental health. For example, it can help you get better sleep, improve your mood and help you to manage stress, anxiety and intrusive thoughts.

City Centre Wellbeing Studio:

Take a break at our City Centre Wellbeing Studio at University Locks. There's a range of active wellbeing sessions to take part in like Zumba, yoga and Stressbox. See the schedule and book classes on **iCity**.

There are also lots of online fitness channels specialising in different forms of exercise available on YouTube. These channels usually have something to suit people of all fitness levels.

- **Adapt to Perform** - a variety of workouts for wheelchair users including HIIT, circuit, yoga and strength workouts: **Adapt To Perform - YouTube**
- **HASFit** - over 1000 workout routines including cardio, HIIT and strength training: **www.youtube.com/user/KozakSportsPerform**
- Yoga with Adriene - yoga sessions for people of all abilities, including beginners: **www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene**
- The Fitness Marshall - fun dance workouts to all your favourite pop songs: **www.youtube.com/user/TheFitnessMarshall**
- FitnessBlender - over 500 different workouts including 5 quick 5 minute workouts: **www.youtube.com/user/FitnessBlender**
- Walk at Home - low intensity walking workouts: **www.youtube.com/user/TheFitnessMarshall**

Online activities:

Keep boredom at bay with these fun online activities:

- Have a go at an online jigsaw puzzle: **www.onlinejigsawpuzzles.net/**
- Learn a new language or brush up on your English skills using Duolingo: **www.duolingo.com**
- Challenge yourself to a word search: **www.free-word-search.com/**



Self-care:

Try to take some time over the festive break to look after your own wellbeing.

You might want to download the BCU Wellbeing App which has some great tools and resources. The app can support you to build habits to help maintain your wellbeing moving forward. The app is available in Apple and Android app stores by searching for BCU Wellbeing.

It can be great to spend time with other people, but remember that it's OK to want to have time to yourself too. This doesn't need to be costly; take a look at some of our ideas below for some inspiration.

- It can be tempting to stay up late every night but try to keep a little routine in your days and weeks.
- Prioritise your mental health. It's ok to say no to some plans if you feel you need some time to relax and unwind.
- Get outdoors. Exercise releases feel good endorphins and on a nice sunny day you can top up on your vitamin D too.
- Take a bath or a long shower and enjoy the opportunity to be disconnected from the world for a short while.
- Put on your favourite music or a podcast. Having a dance to music can be a great way to release tensions and endorphins.
- Have a social media detox day and be present in the moment.
- Practice gratitude **www.mindful.org/an-introduction-to-mindful-gratitude/**
- Meditate. BCU students can access Headspace, which has some great meditations and short courses. **www.work.headspace.com/bcu/member-enroll**

Study:

It's important to get some rest and relaxation over the Christmas holiday period, however you may want to spend some time catching up or getting ahead with your studies. This can be helpful to give your days structure and give you a sense of achievement. Just remember to take regular breaks and don't spend all your holiday time on this!

Curzon Library will only be open for limited hours between 22 December and 5 January 2026. All libraries sites will be closed on 25 December and 26 December. All library sites will either be self-service or closed between 24 December 2025 and 4 January 2026. Check details at **https://libcal.bcu.ac.uk/**



What's on?

Tuesday 16 December

Pause at Uni, 12 - 4pm, Curzon

https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Student-Affairs/Health-and-Wellbeing/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing/Pauseatuni

Wednesday 17 December

Student Christmas Party, 11am to 2pm, Seacole Building SCT024

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage

Wellbeing team podcast

The Wellbeing Team discuss looking after yourself during the festive period and where you can access support if you need it.

https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Student-Affairs/Health-and-Wellbeing/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Team-Podcast





Support available over the Christmas Period (and beyond!)

BCU's Mental Health and Wellbeing Team will be available up to 4pm on Tuesday 23 December 2025, and will re-open at 9am on Monday 5 January 2026. The team is made up of mental health advisers, wellbeing advisers, counsellors and CBT Therapists.

Contact the team on wellbeing@bcu.ac.uk or via iCity: **icity.bcu.ac.uk/Student-Affairs/Health-and-Wellbeing/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing**

We have listed some helpful resources if you are looking for support over the Christmas period. You can also take a look at our iCity pages for up-to-date information on our support and external support services, in addition to the services listed below.

If you require emergency support in your BCU accommodation you can call Security on **0121 331 6969**.

Mental Health

BCU Wellbeing app:

Accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the BCU Wellbeing app aims to help you achieve balance, create healthy habits, and reach your potential. There's a wealth of interactive tools, including podcasts, breathing techniques and more.

Search 'BCU Wellbeing app' on your device's app store to download.

Samaritans:

Offering support 24/7, 365 days of the year. You can get in touch about anything which is troubling you, no matter how big or small. For the quickest response, it's best to phone on their free phone number.

Samaritans also has a free self help app, which you can access via their website.

Website: www.samaritans.org
Phone: 116 123
Email: Jo@samaritans.org

Shout:

A confidential, 24/7 text service, free on all major networks in the UK to support you if you are feeling stressed, anxious or in need of support. Responses are not always immediate, but you will be connected to a Shout volunteer as soon as possible.

Text "space" to 85258
Website: www.giveusashout.org

Papyrus:

A confidential suicide prevention advice line, if you, or someone you know is thinking of suicide. Papyrus offer support between 9am and midnight every day.

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org/
Phone: 0800 068 41 41
Text: 07860 039967
Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Birmingham Mind:

Central Wellbeing Hub: Drop-in hub in the Bullring and Grand Central providing a safe, secure environment for anyone seeking mental health advice, support and signposting.

Talking space: Safe, welcoming talking spaces if you are feeling emotionally distressed or are in a mental health crisis. Open in Selly Oak, Erdington and Northfield from 5 - 11pm.

Website: www.birminghammind.org
Phone: 0121 262 3555
Email: help@birminghammind.org

Grief/loss

Cruse Bereavement:

Offering support online and via the telephone, to anyone effected by grief. Telephone support hours vary throughout the week, so please check online.

Website: www.cruse.org.uk
Phone: 0808 808 1677
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Eating Disorders

Beat:

The UK's eating disorder charity, offering support to individuals with an eating disorder, and to those supporting them. Their Helplines are open 365 days a year from 9am – midnight during the week, and 4pm – midnight on weekends and bank holidays. They also offer a 1:1 online chat service.

Website: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
Phone (helpline): 0808 801 0677
Phone (studentline): 0808 801 0811
Email: studentline@beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Support for Care Experienced People

Rees Foundation:

Rees Foundation run a number of groups called 'Let's Connect', which connect members of the care experienced community.

Website: www.reesfoundation.org/lets-connect
Phone: 0330 094 5645
Email: contactus@reesfoundation.org

Domestic abuse

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid:

Offering support to women and children affected by domestic violence and abuse, including information and support with refuge and housing options.

Their telephone helpline is open 7 days a week 9.15am - 5.15pm and webchat is open Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm.

Website: www.bswaid.org
Phone: 0808 800 0028

Men's Advice Line:

Offering help and support for male victims of domestic abuse via telephone, email and webchat. Telephone support is offered Mon–Fri 10am-8pm and is free from landlines and mobile phones within the UK.

Email support is offered Mon-Fri 9am-8pm and Webchat Wednesday 10-11:30am and 2:30-4pm.

Website: www.mensadviceline.org.uk
Phone: 0808 801 0327
Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Birmingham LGBT Domestic Abuse Service:

The Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service provides support to LGBT people in Birmingham and the wider areas, who are experiencing abuse from partners, ex-partners and family members. Get in touch by completing the form on the contact page on their website, or by telephone or email.

Website: www.blgbt.org
Phone: 0121 643 0821
Email: idva@blgbt.org



Support available over the Christmas Period (and beyond!)

LGBTQ+

LGBT+ Switchboard

Switchboard provides a one stop listening service for LGBTQ+ people on the phone and through instant messaging for whatever you may want to talk about.

Telephone lines are open 10am - 10pm every day, and web support is offered from 6pm. Please check their website for accurate web support opening times.

Website: switchboard.lgbt
Phone: 0300 330 0630

Mindline Trans+

An emotional and mental health support helpline for anyone identifying as transgender, non-binary or genderfluid, also offering support to family members, friends, colleagues and carers. You can call 8pm-midnight, Monday-Friday.

Website: mindlinetrans.org.uk
Phone: 0300 330 546

Alcohol and substance use

Change, Grow, Live (CGL)

Offers online webchat for alcohol and drugs if you are concerned about your consumption and are considering cutting down,in addition to regional support services and in person support groups.

Webchat: www.changegrowlive.org/webchat
Phone: 01212 275890
Email: 01212 275890

FRANK

Provides friendly, confidential advice and information on drugs, including signposting to support services. You can call 24/7, text or chat online 2-6pm 7 days a week.

Email: www.talktofrank.com
Phone: 0300 123 6600
Text: 82111

Other support

Rape Sexual Violence Project RSVP

Offering support to people of any gender affected by sexual abuse and violence at any point in their lives, via helplines, social groups, coffee mornings, counselling and more. Please check their website for opening hours over Christmas.

Website: www.rsvporg.co.uk
Phone: 0121 643 0301
Email: info@rsvporg.co.uk

Horizon

Providing support to people of any gender who have experienced rape or sexual assault. Telephone support is available 24/7, 365 days a year. Their specialist teams can offer you emotional support, medical care, practical help, counselling and information.

Website: www.horizonsarc.org.uk
Phone: 0800 970 0375

National Debt Line

Offering free and independent debt advice over the phone and online. The fastest way to speak to an advisor is online. Service is offered Monday to Friday 9am - 8pm and Saturday 9:30am - 1pm.

Website: www.nationaldebtline.org
Phone: 0808 808 4000

GamCare

GamCare is part of the National Gambling Treatment Service, a network of organisations working together to provide confidential treatment and support for anyone experiencing gambling-related harms, free to access across England Scotland and Wales.

Gambling support is available via telephone and 1:1 web chat 24/7 every day of the year.

Website: www.gamcare.org.uk
Phone: 0808 8020 133
Whatsapp: 020 3031 8881



Your money and celebrating on a budget

The Student Advice and Guidance Team is available until 4pm on Tuesday 23 December 2025. Please get in touch if you think you may struggle financially over the festive period.

We'll be back on Monday 5 January 2026 to help you with money matters. Don't let money be a worry, get in touch! Log an enquiry through Student Support Centre or on the Student Support Helpdesk at **www.bcu.ac.uk/helpdesk**.

The Student Support Centres at both Curzon building and Seacole building will close at 5pm on Tuesday 23 December 2025, and will re-open from 9am on Monday 5 January 2026.

Accessing money

Banks will have limited opening hours over the holidays so it's worth checking your bank's opening times for their branches and call centres in case you need to get in touch.

If you find yourself without money, and you don't already have an overdraft, it's worth speaking to your bank to see if you are eligible as this may give you a financial safety net to get you through.

Top Budgeting Tips

Most people will appreciate that you are on a tight budget so don't put pressure on yourself to buy gifts that you cannot afford. Be honest with friends and family if you don't have the money to buy gifts and maybe agree to just spend time together instead.

1. Why not give alternative gifts such as homemade goods or offer to do tasks for people like babysitting or washing up for a week.
2. If you do buy gifts for friends or family why not reduce the cost by doing a Secret Santa – so each person in the friendship/family group buys for one person only, make sure to agree a cost limit in advance.
3. Avoid using credit or 'buy now pay later' schemes to buy gifts as this will cost you much more in the long run.
4. Don't buy goods on the spur of the moment. Events such as Black Friday and January sales encourage us to buy things quickly for fear of 'losing out'. Before you buy ask yourself: Do I really need/want it? Can I afford it? Can I get it cheaper elsewhere?
5. If you are travelling to stay with family or friends over Christmas try to buy your ticket in advance as you can often get a good discount if you buy in advance.



If you are struggling or worried about managing money over Christmas, then ask for help.

Food supplies over Christmas

Grocery stores

Many shops close over the bank holidays surrounding Christmas and New Year. Plan ahead and check your local store opening times in advance.

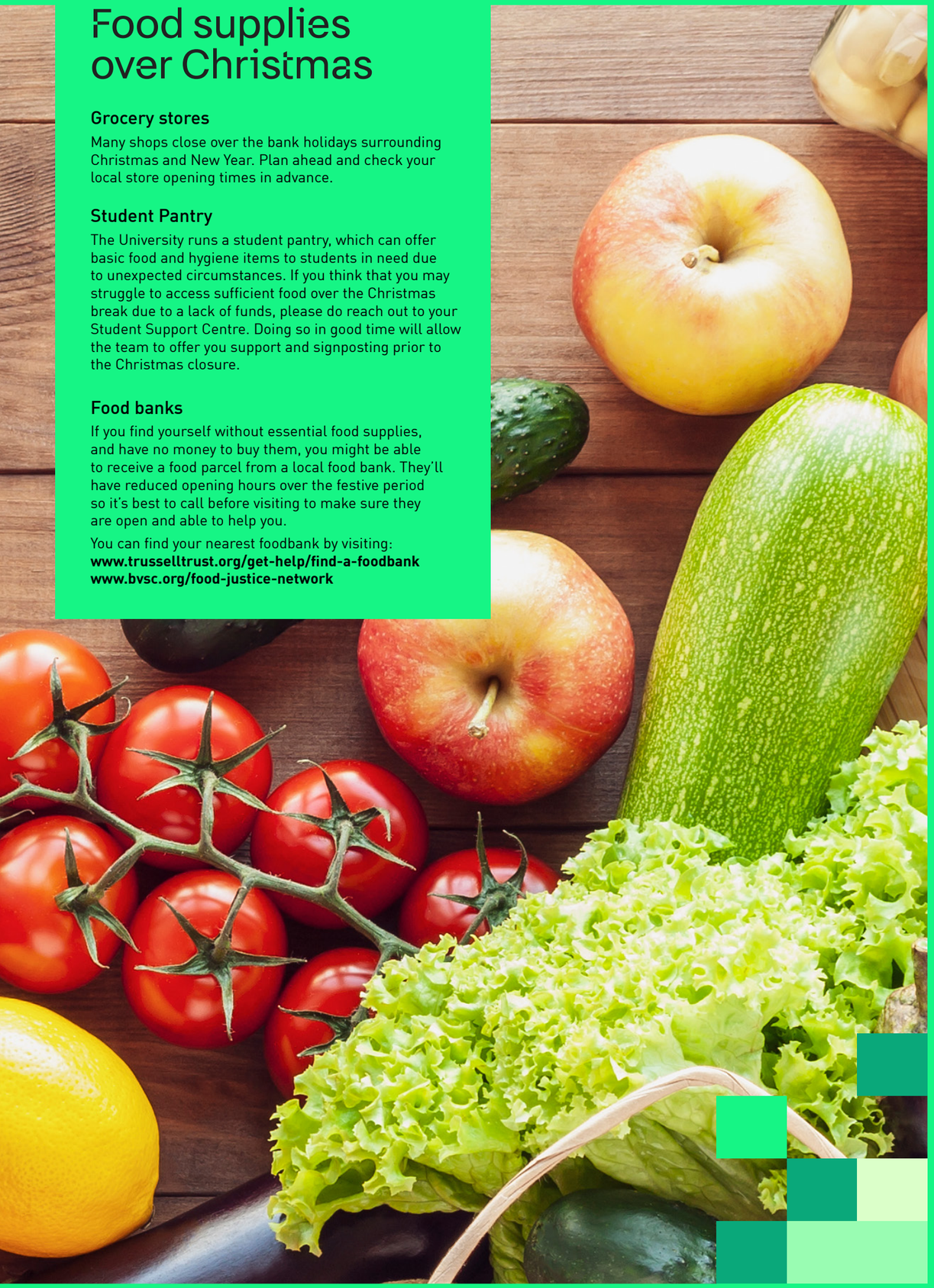
Student Pantry

The University runs a student pantry, which can offer basic food and hygiene items to students in need due to unexpected circumstances. If you think that you may struggle to access sufficient food over the Christmas break due to a lack of funds, please do reach out to your Student Support Centre. Doing so in good time will allow the team to offer you support and signposting prior to the Christmas closure.

Food banks

If you find yourself without essential food supplies, and have no money to buy them, you might be able to receive a food parcel from a local food bank. They'll have reduced opening hours over the festive period so it's best to call before visiting to make sure they are open and able to help you.

You can find your nearest foodbank by visiting:
www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank
www.bvsc.org/food-justice-network



Medical care

We hope you remain safe and well over the Christmas period. If you do find yourself in need of medical advice, or a dentist or pharmacy, you should be able to find somewhere open that suits you on the NHS website: **www.nhs.uk/service-search**.

Please note that urgent care centres and A&E departments are requesting that you contact 111 first and they can arrange an appointment for you if you are able to do this. In a life-threatening emergency, dial 999 for an ambulance. Find NHS walk-in centre services at **www.nhs.uk**.

Mental health

You can find information about NHS services that you help you with your mental health at **www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services**.

If you live in Birmingham or Solihull you can contact crisis services on:

Forward Thinking Birmingham (under 25s) - **0300 300 0099**

Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (over 25s) **- 0121 301 5500**

If you need immediate crisis support, please contact the emergency services on 999 or if possible go to your nearest A&E department. A mental health emergency is just as important as a physical health emergency.

Housing

Emergency accommodation:

If you find yourself facing homelessness and have nowhere to sleep at night, then you should present yourself as homeless to your local council office in the town or city where you would usually reside. Please be aware that the University does not have any routine provisions to offer homeless accommodation to students. If would normally reside in Birmingham, you can follow the below advice. If you would normally reside elsewhere, please find information on your relevant council's homelessness provision or contact one of the below charities.

Support during the day (9am to 4.15pm)

If you need emergency accommodation immediately and you are aged 25 or over, or you are aged 18 to 25 and have dependent children, then please phone the Housing Options Centre on **0121 303 7410**.

If you are under 25 and have no dependent children, or are under 18 with dependent children, phone the Youth Hub on **0300 303 0099**.

Support available out of office hours (5pm until the next morning)

If you need emergency accommodation outside office hours and you are over 18, call the Out of Hours Duty Team on **0121 303 2296**. If you are under 18, call the Emergency Duty Team on **0121 675 4806**.

If you find yourself facing homelessness over the festive period you might find these charities and organisations useful:

- St Basil's (Homelessness for under 25s)
  stbasils.org.uk/get-help
- Shelter Housing Advice Charity
  Shelter Emergency Helpline **0808 303 5346**
  england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/helpline
- Birmingham City Council
  www.birmingham.gov.uk/homepage/226/advice_and_support



If you find yourself in need of housing support and advice please see the Birmingham Council website for information including urgent support: **www.birmingham.gov.uk/housing**.

Your personal safety

If you live in Birmingham already or are staying for the Christmas break, remember to look after your personal safety when enjoying yourself over the festive period.

Birmingham is a great place to live and study, but as with any large city, there are a few things you need to think about to keep yourself safe.

- West Midlands Police have some useful advice on personal safety for students in the West Midlands: **saferstudents.west-midlands.police.uk**
- The University's Security Services has produced some guidance about travelling safely around Birmingham: **icity.bcu.ac.uk/Document/Student-Travel-Advice-1**
- **Hollie Guard app** - a simple shake or tap activates Hollie Guard, automatically sending your location and audio/video evidence to your designated contacts.

