

Cold Weather Health Watch Action Card

Frontline staff – health and social care (including care homes)

Level 0: Year-round planning - all year

- Work within your organisation and with partner organisations to ensure that systems are developed to support the identification and sharing of information between agencies of people who may be vulnerable to cold weather.
- Systematically work to improve the resilience of vulnerable people to severe cold.
- Ensure that all staff have been made aware of the cold weather plan and the dangers of cold weather to health and know how to spot signs and symptoms.
- Use clinic attendances and home visits as opportunities to identify vulnerable people and discuss winter preparedness.
- Work with at-risk individuals, their families and carers to ensure that they are aware of the dangers of cold weather and cold housing and how access support; ensure that there are clear arrangements for ‘signposting’ to other services (eg home insulation schemes; benefits entitlements) when identified in “clinical” situations.
- Work with partners to ensure that vulnerable patients/clients have access to fuel supplies. Link to energy supplier priority service registers as required.
- Ensure that clients and colleagues are aware of, and taken advantage of flu and other vaccination programmes.

Level 1: Winter preparedness & action programme - 1 November to 31 March

- Identify those at risk on your caseload and make necessary changes to care plans for high-risk groups.
- For those with multiple agency inputs, ensure that the key worker is clearly identified and care plans consider measures to reduce risk from cold weather.
- Check client’s room temperature if visiting. Ensure that they have at least one room which meets recommended room temperatures.
- Remind clients of the actions they can take to protect themselves from the effects of severe cold; including warm clothing, warm food and drinks; keeping active as much as they are able within the context of their care plan.
- Continue to “signpost” those at risk clients/ patients to other services (eg home insulation schemes; benefits entitlements) when identified in “clinical” situations; use the Keep Warm Keep Well booklet for up-to-date patient information and advice.
- Use resources available to you for raising awareness of the health risks associated with winter weather and cold housing (for example, pharmacists have a key role in reminding people to have sufficient medicine and help with preventive medicines managements).
- Encourage clients and colleagues to be vaccinated against flu, if not already.

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Level 2: Severe winter weather is forecast - Alert and readiness

Mean temperatures of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow is predicted with 60% confidence

- As appropriate, contact those most at risk and implement care plans.
- Continue to check client's room temperature if visiting to ensure that clients are warm. Ensure that they have at least one room which meets recommended room temperatures.
- Ensure urgent signposting for those at risk (eg in cold housing) to appropriate services.
- Continue to remind clients of the actions they can take to protect themselves from the effects of severe cold.
- Consider how forecast weather conditions may impact on your work – and make appropriate arrangements.
- Make sure you and your teams are prepared for an influx of weather-related injuries and illnesses.

Level 3: Response to severe winter weather - Severe weather action

Mean temperatures of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow

- As appropriate, contact those at risk (visit, phone call) daily.
- Ensure staff can help and advise clients.
- Other actions as per level 2.
- Maintain business continuity

Level 4: Major incident - Emergency response

Central government will declare a level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged cold weather affecting sectors other than health.

Response likely to involve:

- National government departments
- Executive agencies
- Public sector, including health sector
- Voluntary and community sector

All level 3 responsibilities must be maintained during a level 4 incident

Implementation of national emergency response arrangements by central government