

Handbook 2: Cold Weather

Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response Version 1.0 Nov 2023

Document History

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Plan Ownership

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Protective Marking

This Plan has been given the protective marking of **OFFICIAL**

This Plan will be made available to staff who require access to it as part of their role. Where possible stakeholders will be given access to the plan through ResilienceDirect, in other cases it will be sent electronically to those agencies in the distribution list. Upon receipt of the plan, individual agencies become fully responsible for document security and dissemination within their own organisation as per its classification

Distribution List

This document has been produced and is held by the Emergency Preparedness, Resilience & Response Team (EPRR), for Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils. The plan is stored on the Portsmouth and Southampton City Council websites and relevant pages on ResilienceDirect (Secure website). Appropriate access will be given to responding agencies. This Plan will be made available to appropriate members of staff at Portsmouth and Southampton City Council (PCC and SCC) and external stakeholders.

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Foreword

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) launched a new combined [Adverse Weather and Health Plan \(AWHP\)](#) in April 2023 as part of a commitment under the climate change [National Adaptation Programme](#) (NAP) to bring together and improve existing guidance on weather and health.

This plan has been produced by the EPRR Team working on behalf of both Portsmouth and Southampton City Council. Information in this document is relevant to both City Councils.

Joint Adverse Weather and Health Plan

Explains the procedure for the assessment of weather warnings, together with a corresponding escalation procedure and plan activation process.

Handbook 1 – Heatwaves

Outlines the details of Heat Health Alerts (HHA), supporting documents that are available and the core responsibilities of Portsmouth and Southampton City Council's relevant services during a heatwave.

Handbook 2 – Cold weather

Outlines the details of Cold Weather Alerts, supporting documents that are available and the core responsibilities of Portsmouth and Southampton City Council's relevant services during cold weather.

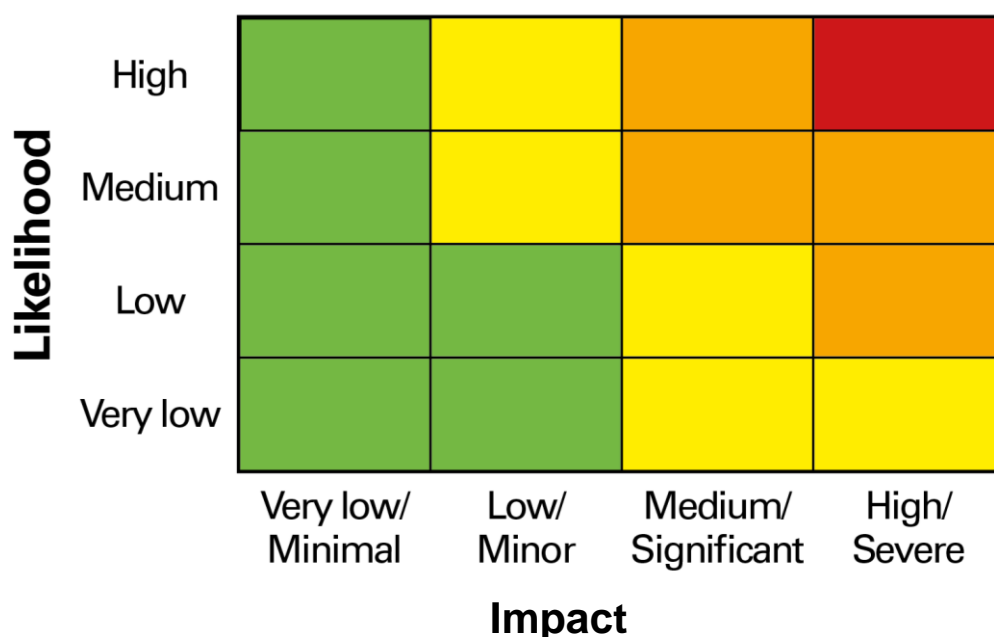
Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AWHP	Adverse Weather and Health Plan
BAU	Business as usual
CHA	Cold Health Alert
EC	Emergency Control
JEPDO	Joint Emergency Planning Duty Officer
EPRR Team	Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response Team
NAP	National Adaptation Programme
NHS	National Health Service
NSWWS	National Severe Weather Warning Service
PCC	Portsmouth City Council
SCC	Southampton City Council
UKHSA	UK Health Security Agency

Section 1.0: Introduction

The Cold Weather Health alert service is provided by UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in partnership with the Met Office from 1st November - 31st March every year. It is designed to help health and social care professionals manage through periods of extreme weather. Should conditions for an alert be reached outside of this period, an extraordinary Cold Health Alert will be issued, and stakeholders are advised to take the usual public health actions as recommended in the Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP).

Depending on the severity, duration and geographical spread of severe cold weather conditions, a series of escalating alerts will be issued up to a major incident (Red); these are:



Green	(Winter preparedness) No alert issued. Considered business as usual
Yellow	(Response) Issued where impacts may be expected for those who are particularly vulnerable or where the confidence in weather forecast for more severe period of cold is low
Amber	(Enhanced response) Issued for situations where impacts are expected across the population. Where impacts are expected across other sectors, an AMBER National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS) Emergency Control (EC) may also be issued
Red	(Emergency response) Significant risk to life for even the healthy population

1.1 Green- (Winter preparedness)

No alert will be issued as the conditions are likely to have minimal impact on health. However, during periods when the risk is minimal, it is important that organisations ensure that they have plans in place and are prepared to respond should an alert (yellow, amber or red) be issued.

1.2 Yellow- (Response)

Yellow alerts cover a range of situations in which action is required within the health and social care sector. Yellow Cold Health Alerts (CHAs) may be issued during periods of cold weather which would be unlikely to impact most people. However, those who are particularly vulnerable (for example older people with multiple health conditions and on multiple medications, or those who are sleeping rough and at greater risk of cold exposure) are likely to struggle to cope in these conditions. A yellow alert may also be issued if the confidence in the weather forecast is low, but there could be more significant impacts if the worst-case scenario is realised. In this situation the alert may be upgraded as the confidence in both the weather forecast and the likelihood of observing those impacts increases.

1.3 Amber- (Enhanced response)

An amber CHA represents a situation in which the expected impacts are likely to be felt across the health and social care sectors, with potential for the whole population to be at risk. Other sectors, apart from health and social care (for example transport) may also start to observe impacts, indicating that a coordinated response is required. Additionally, in some circumstances a National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS) warning may be issued for snow, ice or wind in conjunction with and aligned to the CHA. This situation would indicate that significant impacts are expected across multiple sectors.

1.4 Red- (Emergency response)

A red CHA would indicate significant risk to life for everyone, including the healthy population. Severe impacts would be expected across all sectors and a coordinated

response is essential. The UK government will declare an emergency if there is severe or prolonged cold weather affecting sectors other than health and social care, and if the conditions require a coordinated multi-agency response.

Once a Cold Health Alert (CHA) is issued, it will be cascaded to everyone registered to receive MET Office alerts and is then shared via the councils EPRR team's internal distribution list. CHAs will be issued with as much lead time to the weather event as possible to allow recipients time to make assessments and to initiate all appropriate actions to reduce harm to health. Recipients should review every CHA when issued to ensure they fully understand the potential impacts and how likely they are to occur.

Section 2.0: Actions to consider to support cold weather preparedness

To support cold weather preparedness in all settings. Consideration should be given to the following:

2.1 Identify those at risk

Cold-related ill-health is a complex issue involving many factors. However, there are a variety of health risks that can be brought on or exacerbated by cold weather. The key groups that are particularly at risk in the event of cold weather are:

- people aged over 65
- people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or diabetes
- people with mental ill-health that reduces their ability to self-care (including dementia)
- pregnant women (in view of potential impact of cold on risk of preterm birth)
- children under the age of 5
- people with learning difficulties
- people assessed as being at risk of, or having had, recurrent falls
- people who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves
- people who are housebound or otherwise low mobility
- people living in deprived circumstances
- people living in houses with mould
- people who are fuel poor
- people experiencing homelessness or people sleeping rough
- other marginalised or socially isolated individuals or groups

Develop an understanding of the local population and groups who may be vulnerable to the impacts of adverse weather on health through Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs), Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and other interagency arrangements.

2.2 Work with partners

Work with partner agencies, providers, businesses, and voluntary & community sector organisations to coordinate Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and/or adverse weather plans, ensuring vulnerable and marginalised groups are appropriately supported.

Commissioners should work with partners to ensure that cold weather planning features within wider winter resilience planning, and that a strategic approach to the reduction of excess winter deaths and fuel poverty is taken across the local health and social care economy.

Commissioners should also work with partners on ways to reduce risk for staff, for example through flu vaccination in September and October, providing information and education to help them manage and reduce health risks arising from cold exposure.

2.3 Be prepared for cold weather

To prepare, you can:

- listen to the news and check the local weather forecast so that you know when cold weather is expected
- look out for advice on what to do if services such as power, water supplies and transport are likely to be affected

Think about the risk of slips, trips and falls and how you can mitigate these as the risk of these increase in the autumn and winter for many reasons, such as:

- there is less daylight
- leaves fall onto paths and become wet and slippery
- the cold weather can cause ice and snow to build up on paths

2.4 Internal roles and responsibilities

Not all advice provided here will be relevant to every stakeholder. It should be adapted according to service role, available resources, and the local context.

When a CHA has been issued each service is responsible for assessing the impact of cold weather conditions on:

- vulnerable members

- high-risk settings
- continued internal service delivery
- Implementation of service-based activities upon activation of this plan

2.5 Adult Social Care

Main messages

Cold weather can put people at greater risk of ill-health and even death. Primarily this is because it increases the probability of complications from existing disease, and of injury due to falls.

In all settings, you should reduce the risks associated with exposure to cold weather by:

- developing, and where necessary implementing, BCPs for cold weather and ensuring all staff know how to take action accordingly
- protecting clients and staff by promoting COVID-19 and flu vaccinations
- taking simple measures to protect clients and staff from cold, snow and/or ice

If you work in a setting that provides care in clients' own homes, you should also:

- identify who is at higher risk of cold-related illnesses and how to reduce that risk
- have a plan in place for individuals you are responsible for to keep them warm during the winter and ensure staff know how to raise concerns regarding clients they are working with if necessary
- ensure staff are aware of main sources of support for housing, energy bills and other needs to signpost clients to, including support for those on low incomes

How to prepare for cold weather

Managers should carry out preparation work for cold weather year-round. Social care provider organisations should agree plans for managing cold weather events and distribute them to social care managers and frontline staff before 1st November each year.

Actions to take all year round

In preparation for winter, there are actions you can take depending on your role.

In all settings, you should:

- consult the [action card for providers](#) to identify actions to support year-round planning, and distribute this information where relevant to your teams
- Read the [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: for adult social care managers](#) and distribute this information where relevant to your teams
- ensure data sharing agreements or protocols are in place to allow data and intelligence to be shared, including details of the most vulnerable people where appropriate
- develop business continuity plans to prepare for disruptions caused by adverse cold weather, including energy supply and transport problems, and staff shortages. These plans should include contact details for reporting any concerns to the local authority and other relevant partners (for example in the event of disruptions to heating supplies)

If you work in a care home or other residential setting, you should:

- draught-proof windows, doors, and other points of potential energy loss
- ensure heating systems are maintained and in good working order

If you work in a setting that provides care in clients' own homes, you should:

- establish methods for staff to identify, alert and monitor individuals most vulnerable to cold-related illnesses on your service caseload
- identify local sources of support for clients that may be available if cold weather occurs, through discussion with the local authority, Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and other partners
- develop a training plan for staff to help them identify those most likely to be at risk from cold weather and advise on how to raise concerns where necessary, drawing on established resources such as UKHSA's [helping people living in cold homes e-learning module](#)

Actions to take during the winter months

To prepare for cold weather, there are certain actions you should take: protect those at risk; and support staff.

If you work in a care home or other residential setting, you should:

- ensure that plans are in place to be able to monitor room temperature, body temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure to protect residents

If you work in a setting that provides care in clients' own homes, you should:

- ensure that staff members have identified all those vulnerable to cold weather and that arrangements are in place to support and protect them appropriately – this assessment process should take place at least annually, and may include developing and maintaining a register of the most vulnerable individuals to ensure they can be offered appropriate support where required
- ensure plans and equipment are in place to enable staff members to carry out appropriate home checks when visiting clients – this should include, for example, room temperature assessments, checking medications stocks and ensuring adequate food supplies are available

2.6 Health Care Providers

Main messages

Adverse cold weather can put people at greater risk of ill-health and even death. Primarily this is because it increases the probability of complications from existing disease, and of injury due to falls.

You can reduce the risks associated with exposure to adverse cold weather for those you care for by:

- knowing who is at risk
- being alert to increased cardiovascular, respiratory and other complications from cold exposure
- adapting individual care plans to respond to adverse cold weather
- promoting vaccination for those eligible to reduce risks from COVID-19 and flu
- having action plans in place for your organisation and/or place of work tailored to the local context
- signposting people to sources of support for housing, energy bills and other needs as appropriate, including specific support for those on low incomes

About cold weather and health

Deaths and illnesses during the winter months are significantly higher than at other times of the year. Cold weather can cause people to become unwell in various ways. Direct cold exposure can result in death or severe illness due to hypothermia, although deaths where hypothermia is the primary cause are relatively rare.

Exposure to cold can lead to direct effects including:

- increase the risk of blood clots forming in the body, in turn increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes
- increase susceptibility to chest infections
- worsen breathing problems

- increase the risk of falls

Cold exposure can also result in indirect effects such as increased risk from mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

How to prepare for cold weather

Preparation for cold weather should occur year-round and plans for managing adverse cold weather events should be agreed and distributed before 1st November each year. The UKHSA AWHP outlines 9 important areas for action that healthcare organisations and their partners can consider when developing local cold weather plans. [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: healthcare professionals.](#)

Make as much use as possible of existing care plans to assess which individuals are at particular risk, and to identify what extra help they might need. Where possible, involve their family and any informal carers in these arrangements.

If you are advising, visiting, supporting, or caring for someone in the community, the following steps should be taken before adverse cold weather happens to reduce health risks to the public.

If you are working in a managerial or a patient-facing role, you can protect yourself by getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and/or flu as a preventive measure to reduce the risk of respiratory infections during winter.

If you are working in a patient-facing role, you should:

- ensure local actions for vulnerable clients are being carried out such as arranging daily contacts or visits
- ensure that appropriate home checks are carried out when visiting clients, for example, room temperature, checking medications and food supplies and ensuring carers are receiving appropriate advice and support to help them continue providing care

- ensure that rooms, particularly living rooms and bedrooms, are kept warm (for those in care, residential and nursing home facilities, and in the community)
- advise carers to contact nominated clinical leads if they have concerns regarding the health of a patient or client
- identify and actively monitor high-risk individuals during cold weather episodes, checking that individuals most vulnerable to cold-related illnesses have visitor or phone call arrangements in place

Actions to take all year round

In preparation for winter, there are actions that you can take depending on the role in which you work.

Managerial role

If you are working in a managerial role, you should establish methods to identify, alert and monitor individuals most vulnerable to cold-related illnesses on your caseload. Consider seeking specialist advice from clinical teams if you are unsure how to determine whether someone is at risk.

You should ensure data sharing agreements or protocols are in place to allow organisations to share data or intelligence, including details of the most vulnerable people where appropriate.

Patient-facing role

If you are working in a patient-facing role, you should consider the needs of carers, the support they can continue to give during periods of adverse cold weather, and what additional support they may need to fulfil their roles during periods of adverse cold weather.

You should develop approaches to identify risk in care records and consider whether changes might be necessary to care plans in the event of cold weather.

You should ensure plans are in place to be able to monitor room temperature and, in clinical settings, body temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure.

Actions to take during the winter months

To prepare for adverse cold weather, there are certain actions you can take to identify and protect those at risk, protect yourself, and support training and capacity development.

You should ensure that you offer Covid-19 and/or flu vaccinations to all those who are eligible, as a preventive measure to reduce the risk of respiratory infections during winter.

You should ensure that appropriate home checks are being carried out when visiting clients, for example checking temperatures in rooms (such as living rooms and bedrooms) in which people spend most of their time at home and reviewing medication stocks and food supplies.

You should establish where relevant, referring those that you identify as being at risk from a cold home to local services (for example housing services), who may be able to help improve their living conditions.

You should be ensuring carers are receiving advice and support, for example on signs and symptoms to look out for suggesting that those vulnerable to cold are becoming unwell, or on sources of additional clinical or financial support where necessary.

2.7 Children, Families and Education Services

Actions to take before and during adverse cold weather

To prepare for and respond to severe weather, including cold temperatures, snow and icy conditions, settings can follow the general guidance set out in [DfE's Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings](#).

Buildings and premises, preparing for cold weather

Settings can consult:

- DfE's advice on [standards for school premises](#) which outlines expectations concerning health, safety and welfare of children in education and childcare settings including in response to adverse cold weather
- the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance on [managing cold temperatures in the workplace](#), and [icy conditions and winter weather](#)
- the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) [guidelines on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality in schools](#)

Settings can help meet these recommendations and protect those on-site by:

- ensuring heating systems are maintained and in good working order
- draught-proofing windows, doors, and other points of potential energy loss
- identifying points of higher risk of injury on their premises in the event of ice and/or snow, such as at entrances, exits and playground areas, and prioritising these for clearance or gritting when snow and/or ice occur
- ensuring adequate supplies of grit to clear ice and/or snow if these occur during the winter months
- ensuring adequate supplies of equipment (for example shovels and gloves) to support gritting and clearance of key routes through the premises if ice and/or snow occur

During cold weather

Adverse cold weather, snow and ice may create hazardous conditions for children, parents, carers, and staff. Settings can reduce this risk by:

- gritting and removing ice and/or snow from priority areas and routes
- prioritising maintenance of heating systems to keep rooms being used warm
- closing rooms or buildings that are too cold for children, young people and staff members to use

Advice on keeping buildings warm during adverse cold weather can be adapted from guidance above to prepare for cold weather.

Finally, consider ventilating indoor spaces, especially those where people gather, even for short periods each day to help reduce the risk of spread of infection.

Supporting children

Preparing for cold weather

Reducing the risk of infections before and during cold weather spells is important for protecting children's health. Settings can support this by:

- promoting vaccination for flu for children to help reduce risks from respiratory infections during the winter and encouraging parents and carers to keep their children up to date with routine immunisations
- reinforcing public health messages around hand and respiratory hygiene and taking other steps to prevent the spread of infection during the winter
- providing advice on appropriate clothing for adverse cold weather, ice or snow
- providing parents with [information on children attending school or early years settings when ill](#)

During cold weather

Settings can support children and young people during adverse cold weather episodes by:

- encouraging physical activity where possible to help keep children and young people warm where appropriate, while reinforcing advice on appropriate activities and clothing to wear during adverse cold weather, ice and/or snow
- providing information to children, young people and their parents or carers on important logistical changes during severe weather episodes such as changes to key bus routes

- completing risk assessments and providing advice on reducing the risk of injury in icy and/or snowy conditions, and outdoor play in these conditions where risk assessments indicate this is possible
- ensuring sufficient supply of hot meals and snacks while children are in settings
- continuing to reinforce public health messages around hand and respiratory hygiene to reduce the risks from infections during the winter
- continuing to signpost parents and carers of vulnerable children to key sources of support (for example heating and other energy efficiency measures) during cold weather periods, where appropriate

Additional advice on caring for babies in cold weather

Staff in nurseries and other early years settings should be mindful that, while it is important to ensure babies are appropriately protected from cold, they should also not get too hot. Overheating can increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies can overheat because of too much bedding or clothing, or because the room is too hot. More information about [how to reduce the risk of babies overheating](#) is available from NHS England.

Further guidance on looking after children and those in early years setting can be found here: [Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during cold weather: teachers and other educational professionals.](#)

2.8 Public Health

- Provision of advice and guidance to health and social care settings and wellbeing forums,
- Activation and management of localised Incident Management Teams (IMT) where relevant, providing escalation to wider corporate response where required.

2.9 Highways

- Assist traffic management through provision of highways support - roads & signs, road clearance.
- Provision of timely advice to the public on route availability and any diversion routes,
- Winter maintenance programme in place including drain clearance, gritting, and snow clearance.
 - 1st October to 30th April for Portsmouth
 - 1st November to 31st March for Southampton
- Monitoring to identify any potential adverse weather conditions such as high winds. The Highways and Grounds Maintenance teams on hand day and night to deal with any reports such as fallen trees, branches.

2.10 Housing

Cases of carbon monoxide poisoning typically increase during the winter months. This is because people are more likely to use cooking or heating systems at home that worsen indoor air quality and are less likely to ventilate their homes as they would during warmer weather.

- ensure local actions for the vulnerable are being carried out such as arranging contacts or visits
- identify and actively monitor high-risk individuals during cold weather episodes, checking that individuals most vulnerable to cold-related illnesses have visitor or phone call arrangements in place, the risk of exposure to an underheated home is greater among those on low incomes, and those who are housebound.

2.11 Guidance for those with responsibilities for people currently sleeping rough in England.

Typically, local SWEPS have been designed to be triggered by a specific temperature threshold. In contrast, the CHA system is based on forecasting expected health and social care system impacts of the weather. This is in alignment with the [National Severe Weather Warning Service](#). Consider which approach

to SWEP activation is most suitable for your local plans. Emergency response protocols should involve all relevant, local stakeholders to ensure robust partnership working across the local authority, other local public bodies, voluntary, community, and faith-based sector organisations.

Main messages

When supporting people sleeping rough before and during cold weather, consider:

- people sleeping rough are at high risk of poor health outcomes or even death during cold weather episodes
- before winter begins, clear plans should be in place to support those who are sleeping rough, tailored to the local context
- identify who and where your most vulnerable individuals are, how accommodation will be provided for them when SWEP are triggered, and other ways in which you can help them through periods of cold weather
- identify factors that may affect your team's ability to operate in cold weather and adapt care strategy and plans accordingly (such as transport disruption, and increased risk of staff illness affecting capacity)
- promote key winter preventive measures such as COVID-19 and flu vaccination for people sleeping rough, and for eligible staff members, to reduce risks of infection
- develop best practice by collaborating with local authorities, other relevant partners, and people sleeping rough, to provide mutual support and share learning#

Preparation for cold weather

Preparation should occur year-round and plans for managing cold weather events should be agreed and distributed before 1st November each year.

Actions to take all year round

To support year-round action in preparation for cold weather, you should:

- consider improving the existing SWEPP with local partners, bringing in evidence on the effectiveness of work from previous years where available and local good practice
- consider whether local SWEPP activation thresholds should be temperature based or aligned with new impact based CHA system
- whilst all people sleeping rough are at high risk from cold weather, if resources are limited consider identifying those most at risk and creating a risk register to help keep track of what support is being provided and to whom
- engage with individuals with lived experience to understand local context and where vulnerable individuals are likely to go during cold weather
- build relationships and trust with people sleeping rough and service partners (this must include the local authority) to strengthen resilience when operating under the physical and operational stress of cold weather, for example, through consultation on service design, and through direct participation of people sleeping rough in program development and implementation
- promote access to good quality healthcare, which will lead to improved treatment of long-term conditions
- consider targeted actions in areas with higher numbers of people sleeping rough

[Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: people homeless and sleeping rough](#)

2.12 Communications

- Provision of relevant advice and guidance to the public, staff, and elected members, such as:
 - Changes to scheduled services e.g. bin collections
 - Ice/water safety
 - Keeping well this winter - flu jab advice

-
- Keeping warm this winter advice
 - Travelling safely
 - Provide support to multi-agency Warning and Informing emergency response structure if established

2.13 Events

- Undertake risk assessments for any significant events taking place in the city during cold weather
- Engage with event organisers on mitigation and planning arrangements
- Liaise with Communications team to publicise safe travel advice and winter messaging
- Assess land conditions and consider mitigations such as grit, trackway
- Consider staff roles and rotas to maintain staff safety
- Consider staff welfare - provision of PPE, heaters, etc

2.14 IT

- Increase demand for home working when staff are advised to work for home where possible

Employers must assess the risks to the health and safety of their workers. The minimum temperature in an indoor workplace should normally be at least 16°C or 13°C if much of the work involves rigorous physical effort. There are practical steps you can take to keep people as comfortable as possible when working in the cold, consider simple measures such as:

- Work environment: Temperature, humidity, and your employee's proximity to cold
- Providing adequate workplace heating, such as portable heaters, to ensure work areas are warm enough when they are occupied
- Design processes that minimise exposure to cold areas and cold products
- Reduce draughts while still keeping adequate ventilation
- Provide appropriate PPE for cold environments e.g. winter gloves and hats, base layers, coats

- Vulnerable staff: Elderly staff or employees with medical conditions might find working in low temperatures more difficult.

You can also change work systems:

- Limit exposure by introducing systems such as flexible working patterns or job rotation
- Provide enough breaks to allow workers to get hot drinks or warm up in heated areas

The EPRR team will engage with services throughout cold weather conditions, services should provide details of any severe impacts to service delivery or concerns for vulnerable people. If appropriate, the EPRR Team will escalate the response as set out in the Joint Emergency Response Plan.

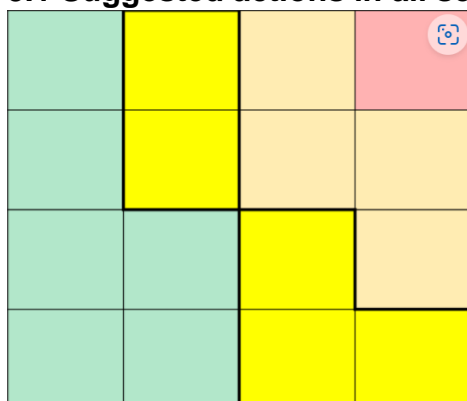
Section 3.0 Further Supporting Documentation and Advice/Actions

This plan is written in conjunction with the UKHSA Adverse Weather and Health Plan which should also be referred to for detailed guidance and actions. It is available at the following website:

[Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#)

There are several useful documents and websites that provides advice for organisations and the public. Note: some links may require copy and pasting.

3.1 Suggested actions in all settings once a yellow alert is issued:



Impact and likelihood risk matrix: yellow alert

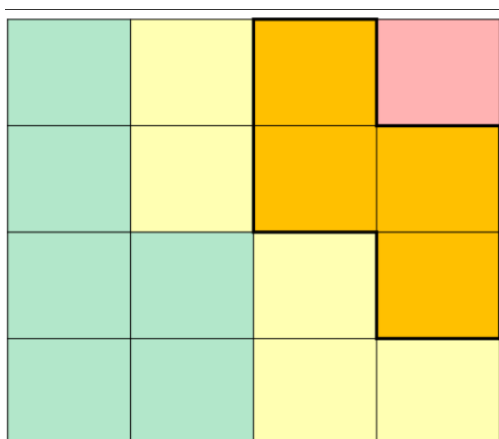
- ensure relevant staff members are aware of and understand BCPs and/or cold weather plans, including cascading plans to relevant members of staff
- use the CHA impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for and response to cold weather
- ensure key partners, including managers across the services are aware of the alerts and can access relevant advice
- consider how to make best use of available capacity in preparation for surges in demand,
- communicate proactive public health messages aimed at the public, especially to vulnerable groups and underserved populations to help them identify risks of cold exposure and understand how to manage them
- work with partner agencies (for example transport) to ensure arrangements for road and/or pavement gritting are in place

Suggested actions in all settings once an alert is in effect:

- activate BCPs and emergency plans as required
- use the CHA impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for and response to cold weather

- increase pro-active communications aimed at the public, especially to underserved populations and vulnerable groups, to help them identify risks of cold exposure and understand how to manage them
- continue to ensure that organisations and staff are prompted to signpost vulnerable people to other sources of support (for example for energy efficiency measures benefits or related advice)
- activate road/pavement gritting to allow access to critical services and pedestrian hotspots, if ice and/or snow occur

3.2 Suggested actions to consider for an Amber alert in all settings




Impact and likelihood risk matrix: amber alert

Suggested actions for all settings once alert is issued:

- activate local BCPs and/or cold weather plans, including cascading alert to relevant members of staff
- use the CHA impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for and response to cold weather
- support staff to determine how and where to prioritise travel, especially if ice and/or snow occur
- increase the volume and frequency of proactive communication aimed at the public, especially to underserved populations and vulnerable groups, to help them identify risks of cold exposure and understand how to manage them
- support partner organisations to prioritise essential travel especially if ice and/or snow are expected
- work with partner agencies (for example transport) to ensure road and pavement gritting arrangements are in effect to allow access to critical services and pedestrian hotspots if snow/ice occur

3.3 Suggested actions to consider for a red alert in all settings

Impact and likelihood risk matrix: red alert

Suggested actions for all setting once alert is issued:

- follow all local emergency response plans and feed into local (and, where appropriate, national) coordination and response
- use the CHA impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for and response to cold weather
- increase evidence-based advice to health and social care workers working in the community, health and social care settings, and to the wider workforce
- increase evidence-based communication messages aimed at the public, especially to underserved populations and vulnerable groups, to help them identify risks of cold exposure and understand how to manage them
- support staff to determine how and where to prioritise travel
- continue other actions as per amber alert above unless advised to the contrary

3.4 Protect those at risk

If a CHA is issued, there are additional actions you should take. In all settings, you should:

- consult the action card for providers to identify actions appropriate to the received alert level and distribute this information where necessary to your teams
- ensure that ice and/or snow is gritted or removed from priority areas and routes, if these occur

If you work in a care home or other residential setting, you should:

- prioritise maintenance of heating systems to keep rooms being used warm
- ensure that clients have access to other ways of keeping warm (for example blankets) if needed

If you work in a setting that provides care in clients' own homes, you should:

- continue to ensure local actions for the vulnerable such as arranging daily contacts or visits are taking place, as outlined in the [action card for providers](#)
- ensure staff are undertaking appropriate home checks when visiting clients, for example, room temperature, medication and food supplies
- ensure that high-risk individuals are actively monitored during cold weather episodes, and that those most vulnerable to cold-related illnesses have visitor or phone call arrangements in place
- train staff to help them identify those most likely to be at risk from adverse cold weather; this training should address how to document risks and raise concerns where necessary, including providing contact details for local authority health and housing services

3.5 Protect staff

During adverse cold weather, day-to-day practice may be disrupted. Staff may find it difficult to commute to work, or to reach clients through street outreach work. Staff absences may also be more likely due to, for example, respiratory illness. Business continuity plans may therefore need to be implemented.

Consider:

- identifying any staff who are more vulnerable to cold, and directing them to advice in, for example, UKHSA's [keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather guidance](#)

- advice from the [Health Safety Executive guidance on temperature in the workplace](#)
- promote vaccination for COVID-19 and/or flu among those who are eligible, to help reduce risks from respiratory infections during the winter
- identify points of higher risk of injury to safeguard access to critical services in the event of ice and/or snow, such as at entrances and exits, and prioritise these for clearance or gritting when snow and/or ice occur – this would include ensuring adequate supplies of relevant equipment (such as shovels and gloves)
- provide staff with details of cost of living including help to manage energy bills that they can signpost clients to where appropriate

3.6 Keep Warm Keep Well Leaflet

The following link takes you to the NHS "Keep Warm, Keep Well" and top tips for keeping warm and well leaflets.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-warm-keep-well-leaflet-gives-advice-on-staying-healthy-in-cold-weather>

- [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather](#)
- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: people homeless and sleeping rough](#)
- [Top tips for keeping warm and well in winter – leaflet](#)
- [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather – poster](#)
- [Weather-Health Alerting System: user guide](#)

3.7 Support training and capacity development

Build the capacity of your frontline staff with specific training, by considering:

- the relevant preventative measures in your context, such as eligibility and pathways for receiving vaccination,
- what cold-related health problems such as hypothermia and frostbite look like and what to do if they are encountered
- how concerns can be escalated and how you work with other services

- how staff can keep themselves safe in cold weather, including drawing on measures in UKHSA's [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather](#) guidance

Section 4: Cold Health Alert Action Cards

The Cold-Health Alert (CHA) action cards have been updated to reflect the new 'impact-based' CHA warning systems, which have been developed in tandem with the [Adverse Weather and Health Plan \(AWHP\)](#). The AWHP, CHA action cards and associated documents provide a broad framework for action, and local areas and organisations should tailor these good-practice suggestions to their local needs and ensure that these fit with wider local arrangements.

A CHA should trigger a series of actions by different organisations and professionals as well as the public, building upon year-round planning activities to ensure cold-weather preparedness. The action cards emphasise the importance of joint working across agencies including the voluntary and community sectors and highlight one aim of the AWHP: to ensure that there is an integrated response to severe weather events across sectors. Local areas will need to consider those actions indicated in the relevant section which will need to be taken jointly across organisations and sectors.

This Cold-Health Alert (CHA) action card summarises the suggested actions should be considered to prepare for and respond to each CHA level for various workstreams.

Local areas and organisations should tailor these good-practice suggestions to their local needs and ensure that these fit with wider local arrangements.

Cold-health action cards cover the core elements of Cold Health Alert action plans looking at:

- longer-term development and planning
- preparation before the winter
- prevention during the winter
- specific responses to cold weather
- monitoring and evaluation

4.1 Commissioners

This Cold-Health Alert (CHA) action card summarises the suggested actions that commissioners of health and social care should take to prepare for and respond to each CHA type, including:

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- commissioners of health and social care services
 - local authorities
 - directors of public health
 - Integrated Care Systems
 - [Cold-Health Alert summary action card for commissioners](#)
 - [Actions to consider all year round to support cold weather preparedness](#)
 - [Cold weather preparedness](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for a yellow alert](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for an amber alert](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for a red alert](#)

4.2 Health and Social care providers

This Cold-Health Alert (CHA) action card summarises the suggested actions that providers of health or social care should consider to prepare for and respond to each CHA type. It is intended primarily for managers and staff working in the following settings:

- hospitals
- adult or children's social care providers in care homes and other residential settings
- health and/or social care providers in the community operating from fixed sites such as GP surgeries
- services delivering care to people in their homes
- [Cold Weather Plan Action Cards Health and Social Care Providers](#)
 - [Actions to consider all year round to support cold weather preparedness](#)
 - [Cold weather preparedness \(green\)](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for a yellow alert](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for an amber alert](#)
 - [Suggested actions to consider for a red alert](#)

4.3 Volunteers and Community Sector

This Cold-Health Alert (CHA) action card summarises the suggested actions that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations should consider to prepare for and respond to each CHA type.

- [Cold-Health Alert summary action card for voluntary and community sector](#)

- [Suggested actions to consider all year round to support cold weather preparedness](#)
- [Cold weather preparedness](#)
- [Suggested actions to consider for a yellow alert](#)
- [Suggested actions to consider for an amber alert](#)
- [Suggested actions to consider for a red alert](#)

