Community and voluntary sector

Level 0: Long-term planning – All year

• engage with local statutory partners to agree how the community and voluntary sector can contribute to the local community resilience arrangements
• develop a community emergency plan to:
  o identify and support vulnerable neighbours in the winter
  o assess the impact severe weather might have on the provision and use of usual community venues
  o ensure that pavements and public walkways are cleared of snow and ice in the local community
  o agree support, resources and training to maximise effective use of volunteers
  o support recruitment of volunteers
  o agree mechanisms for distributing food, fuel, emergency heating, health, social care and other provision to vulnerable people
  o review emergency housing and hostel provision
  o agree arrangements with other community groups to maximise contact with vulnerable people
  o identify available services for vulnerable people and agree signposting arrangements with providers

Level 1: Winter preparedness and action programme – 1 November to 31 March

• test the community emergency plan to ensure that roles and responsibilities and actions are clear
• set up rotas of willing volunteers to keep the community safe during inclement weather and to check on vulnerable people and neighbours
• support the provision of appropriate advice about the health risks of cold weather/cold housing especially with vulnerable people
• ensure that there is a business continuity plan for severe winter weather to ensure support can continue to be given to vulnerable people
• actively engage vulnerable people known to be at risk and check on welfare regularly and support them to seek help if necessary
Level 2: Severe winter weather is forecast – Alert and readiness

Mean temperature of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are predicted within 48 hours, with 60% confidence

- activate the community emergency plan.
- activate the business continuity plan
- continue to actively engage vulnerable people known to be at risk and check on welfare regularly and support them to seek help if necessary
- stay tuned to the weather forecast

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

Severe winter weather is now occurring: mean temperature of 2°C or less and/or widespread ice and heavy snow

- implement community emergency plan
- contact vulnerable people to ensure they are safe and well, and support them to seek help if necessary
- ensure volunteers are appropriately supported

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

- continue actions as per level 3 unless advised to the contrary
- implementation of national emergency response arrangements by central government
- follow key public health and weather alert messages as broadcast on the media

The Cold Weather Plan for England 2013 and associated documents can be accessed at www.gov.uk/phe