



GPs and practice staff

Level 0: Long-term planning – All year

- be aware of emergency planning measures relevant to general practice.
See www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/gov/epr
- promote flu immunisation to both staff and patients
- ensure GPs and practice staff members are aware of local services to improve warmth in the home
- consider training on seasonal weather and the identification of vulnerable individuals to help staff be more aware of the effects of cold weather on health; those groups of patients likely to be most vulnerable; and how they can signpost patients on to other services
- consider use of tools to aid systematic identification of vulnerable individuals
- consider using opportunistic approaches to signpost appropriate patients to other services when they present for other reasons. For example, flu vaccination clinics can be an opportunity to promote core public health messages with vulnerable individuals

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

- staff training should include a specific session on the Cold Weather Plan and cold weather resilience where required, relevant and appropriate to local conditions
- consider how you can promote key public health messages in the surgery. For example, take advantage of clinical contacts to reinforce public health messages about cold weather and cold homes on health
- get a flu jab to help protect you and your patients
- consider using a cold weather scenario as a table-top exercise to test your business continuity arrangements
- be aware of systems to refer patients to appropriate services from other agencies
- when making home visits, be aware of the room temperature in the household, and if required, know how to advise on levels that are of concern and as necessary, to signpost to other services
- consider using the *Keep Warm, Keep Well* booklet for up-to-date information and advice for patients

Cold Weather Plan for England 2013: Action cards for Cold Weather Alert Service

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

- take advantage of clinical contacts to reinforce public health messages about cold weather and cold homes on health
- when prioritising visits, consider vulnerability to cold as a factor in decision making

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

- be aware of a possible surge in demand in the days following a cold spell
- ensure that staff members are aware of cold weather risks and are able to advise patients appropriately

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

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