

Cold Weather Plan for England 2012: Action cards for Cold Weather Alert Service

GPs and primary care teams

Level 0 Long-term planning *All year*

- Consider the central community role of general practice, particularly in rural areas, and work with local resilience forums and other stakeholders in resilience planning
- Promote flu immunisation for both staff and patients*
- Discuss and agree with your local partners the arrangements for 'signposting' to other services such as affordable warmth and benefits
- Staff training should include sessions 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 onto other services
- Consider using opportunistic approaches to signpost appropriate patients to other services when they present for other reasons (see Figure 3.3, Cold Weather Plan). For example, flu jab clinics can be an opportunity to promote core public health messages with vulnerable individuals
- Discuss available tools and toolkits with practice and community nursing staff to aid systematic identification of vulnerable people

Level 1 Winter preparedness programme *1 November–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
- Consider how you can adapt your team's capacity to a possible surge in activity and/or disruptions in transport links; patient access to pharmaceutical supplies; etc.
- Get a flu jab to help protect yourself and your patients
- Use the start of the Cold Weather Alerts season as an opportunity to review business continuity arrangements

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 core public health messages about the effects of cold weather and cold homes on health
- Activate systems to help signpost patients to appropriate services from other agencies
- Consider how forecast weather conditions may impact on your work – and make appropriate arrangements. For example, how will it affect home visits and what alternatives are available?
- Your primary care team should, when making home visits, be broadly aware of the room temperature in the household and, if required, know how to advise on levels that are of concern and signpost to other services

*NHS employers. Seasonal flu campaign.

<http://www.nhsemmployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/SeasonalFluCampaign/Pages/Seasonal-flu-campaign.aspx>

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Level 3 Response to severe winter weather – Severe weather action

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

- Work with other NHS and social care, community and voluntary organisations to ensure strategic coordination of response, taking into account the likely surge in demand for primary care in the days following a cold spell
- Be prepared to activate the business continuity plan
- Ensure that staff 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