

Cold Weather Plan for England 2012

Supporting the Case



DH INFORMATION READER BOX

Policy	Clinical	Estates
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Description	The Cold Weather Plan for England 2012 is to be reissued in October 2012 to raise both public and professional awareness of the effects of severe cold on health. The purpose of the Plan is to enhance resilience in the event of severe cold weather. It is an important component of overall winter and emergency planning and wider health promotion activity.
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Introduction

The current volume, *Supporting the Case*, is being published as a companion document to *Cold Weather Plan for England 2012*. (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/tag/cold-weather-plan/>)

Supporting the Case provides background information on a range of topics related to the Cold Weather Plan, including a review of the 2011/12 winter period; an evaluation of the first year of the Cold Weather Plan; and further information about Cold Weather Alerts and messages to the public.

Section 1

The essential elements of effective cold weather and winter planning

1.1 Essential elements of effective local cold weather planning

This Cold Weather Plan builds on measures taken by the Department of Health (DH) and the NHS to protect individuals and communities from the effects of severe winter weather. These wider measures were set out in the annual winter planning letter from the DH to the NHS and local authorities in September 2012 (Ref 1-1)¹. The winter planning letter provides guidance for local areas on the measures to take to prepare and respond to winter weather to ensure that the population remains healthy and that essential services operate smoothly.

Local cold weather plans should form an integral part of wider winter preparedness and response measures developed jointly by the NHS, local authorities and local resilience forums (LRFs).

The essential elements of an effective local cold weather planning process comprise:

- **Strategic planning:** Involving coordinated long-term planning between agencies to protect people and infrastructure from the effects of severe winter weather and thus reduce excess winter illness and death. As local health and wellbeing boards develop across the country, it is anticipated that they will take a leadership role in long-term planning for cold weather (and wider climate-change-related events) and ensure joint working among local organisations that have a role to play in mitigating, adapting or responding to such occurrences.
- **Advance warning and advice during the winter months:** Involving a Cold Weather Alert service from 1 November to 31 March based on Met Office forecasts, which should trigger varying levels of response from the NHS, local authority voluntary and community organisations, the Department of Health and other agencies. The alert system has recently been amended in response to advice from across the country.

¹ Ref 1-1. Department of Health. Preparations for winter planning and reporting 2012/13. Gateway ref: 18086. <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/winter-reporting-2012-13/>

- **Communicating with the public:** There are general duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to warn and inform the public before, during and after an emergency. Local resilience forums continue to play a crucial role in coordinating, preparing and responding to cold weather and other winter emergencies. These duties include:
 - working with the media to get advice to people quickly, both before and during severe winter weather
 - raising awareness of how cold weather affects health and what preventive action people can take, both throughout the year and during cold weather emergencies
 - making Keep Warm Keep Well campaign materials available online to help local organisations communicate with the public every winter.
- **Communicating with service providers:** Provider organisations should make cold weather information available to health and social care professionals such as GPs, practice nurses and district nurses, and those working in voluntary organisations, to help them identify vulnerable patients. Provider organisations should demonstrate good practice by:
 - supporting health and social care professionals and voluntary groups to implement measures that protect people in their care and reduce cold-related illness and death in those most at risk
 - helping staff to remain fit and well to reduce the level of absenteeism in NHS and care services. Supplying flu vaccination to front-line health and social care workers protects them and reduces the risk of them passing the virus to vulnerable patients, staff and family members.
- **Engaging the community:** Providing extra help, where possible, to care for those most at risk, such as isolated older people and those with pre-existing health problems or disability. This could come from local authorities, health and social care services, the voluntary sector, communities and faith groups, or families and others. This would be determined locally as part of the person's individual care plan. Additional help to ensure people are claiming entitlements to benefits should also be signposted. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has recently prepared further advice about support for winter warmth initiatives (section 6).

1.2 The Cold Weather Plan and existing winter planning

The Cold Weather Plan builds on existing programmes and measures run by the Department of Health and the NHS to protect individuals and communities over the winter period. These include:

- **Annual seasonal influenza (flu) vaccination programme** (<http://immunisation.dh.gov.uk/flu-vac-leaflet-winter-201213/>): This aims to protect people from the harmful effects of flu and is offered, free of charge, to certain at-risk groups. The national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign website can be found at: www.nhsemployers.org/flu

- **Pneumococcal vaccination programme:** This aims to protect those people most at risk from pneumococcal disease which can cause meningitis, septicaemia and pneumonia
- **Keep Warm Keep Well:** This provides advice on staying warm over the winter and checking on neighbours and relatives who may be vulnerable during cold weather in order to reduce illness and deaths. Materials will continue to be available online to help local organisations communicate with the public: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/winterhealth/Pages/KeepWarmKeepWell.aspx>
- **NHS Choices:** The main NHS website gives reliable information on health conditions, treatments, managing long-term health conditions, and keeping fit and well. It includes topics such as keeping warm, the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, the importance of eating well, and coping with colds and flu. The site also offers symptom checkers and details of all local health services (www.nhs.uk/winterhealth)
- **NHS winter pressures reporting and winter resilience programmes:** These are plans made locally and nationally over the winter to help the NHS and local agencies to manage the demands placed on essential services so they can continue to operate smoothly through severe winter weather (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/winter-reporting-2012-13/>)
- **Winterwatch:** This service provides information for service professionals and users about the current volume of activity in response to the winter pressures together with practical advice from the Chief Medical Officer on keeping healthy when the weather is very cold. Winterwatch includes data on how the NHS is coping with the increased demand on its services and the weekly National Influenza Report from the Health Protection Agency (HPA). <http://winterwatch.dh.gov.uk/>
- **Excess Seasonal Deaths Toolkit:** This was produced by the Department of Health to help local communities take a systematic approach to reduce the risk of seasonal excess deaths in older people (http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_115098.pdf)
- **Excess Winter Deaths Atlas for England:** Information about excess winter deaths produced in association with the Public Health Observatories www.wmpho.org.uk/excesswinterdeathsInEnglandatlas/
- **Warm Homes Healthy People Fund:** This is a national initiative to support local authorities and their partners in reducing death and ill health in England due to cold housing in the coming winter. Further details are given in section 4 of the *Cold Weather Plan for England 2012* and can also be found at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/lac-whhp-fund/>

1.3 Public Health Outcomes Framework

In January 2012, the Government published the first *Public Health Outcomes Framework* (PHOF) (Ref 1-2)². The new PHOF sets out the strategic direction for the new public health system and includes two high-level outcomes and a set of supporting indicators which will allow year-on-year progress to be measured. This will help us to understand the progress that is being made towards increasing healthy life expectancy and reducing health inequalities.

In recognition of the continued challenge to reduce the high numbers of excess winter deaths (EWDs) in England, the PHOF includes two indicators which are directly relevant to the Cold Weather Plan:

- excess winter deaths
- fuel poverty

The PHOF baseline data will be published for upper tier and unitary local authorities by the Department of Health in autumn 2012, and will allow local areas to benchmark the level of excess winter deaths in their area.

The fuel poverty indicator is one of a range of indicators in domain 1 of the PHOF that focus on improving the wider determinants (i.e. the 'causes of the causes') of health, something which is particularly key to reducing health inequalities. The inclusion of this indicator in the PHOF is an acknowledgement of the evidence that living in a cold home is linked to a range of negative health outcomes and that local authorities and their partners will all have a significant role to play in reducing its effects. The Government's fuel poverty indicator, which will be included in the PHOF, is subject to the outcome of a consultation on the recommendations made by an independent review of the definition of fuel poverty, led by Professor Hills, which concluded in March 2012. The consultation closes on the 30 November 2012. For more information, please refer to: http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/fuel_poverty/fuel_poverty.aspx (Ref 1-3)³

In recognition of these wider aspects of cold housing on health, the Department of Health is once again running the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund (see section 4 in the *Cold Weather Plan for England 2012*).

For more general background reading on the effects of cold weather and cold homes on health, please refer to *Making the Case*, which was published in association with the *Cold Weather Plan 2011* (Ref 1-4)⁴

2 Ref 1.2. Department of Health. Improving outcomes and supporting transparency Part 1: A public health outcomes framework for England, 2013-2016. January 2012.

3 Ref 1 – 3. DECC. Fuel Poverty: changing the framework for measurement. Taking forward the recommendations from the Hills Review. URN 12D/336 18 September 2012. http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/fuel_poverty/fuel_poverty.aspx

4 Ref 1-4. *Making the Case: Why cold weather planning is essential to health and well-being* (www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_130564).

Section 2

The latest data for excess winter deaths

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces annual figures on excess winter deaths (Ref 2-1)⁵. Over the last decade, the number of excess winter deaths in England has varied considerably depending on the severity of the winter and the underlying level of cold-weather-related ill health in the population, but on average the number of excess deaths has been just over 25,100 a year.

Table 2.1: Excess winter deaths, England, 2001/02 to 2010/11

Year	Number of excess winter deaths
2001/02	25,790
2002/03	22,620
2003/04	21,930
2004/05	29,740
2005/06	23,740
2006/07	22,380
2007/08	23,290
2008/09	34,000
2009/10	24,170
2010/11	23,700

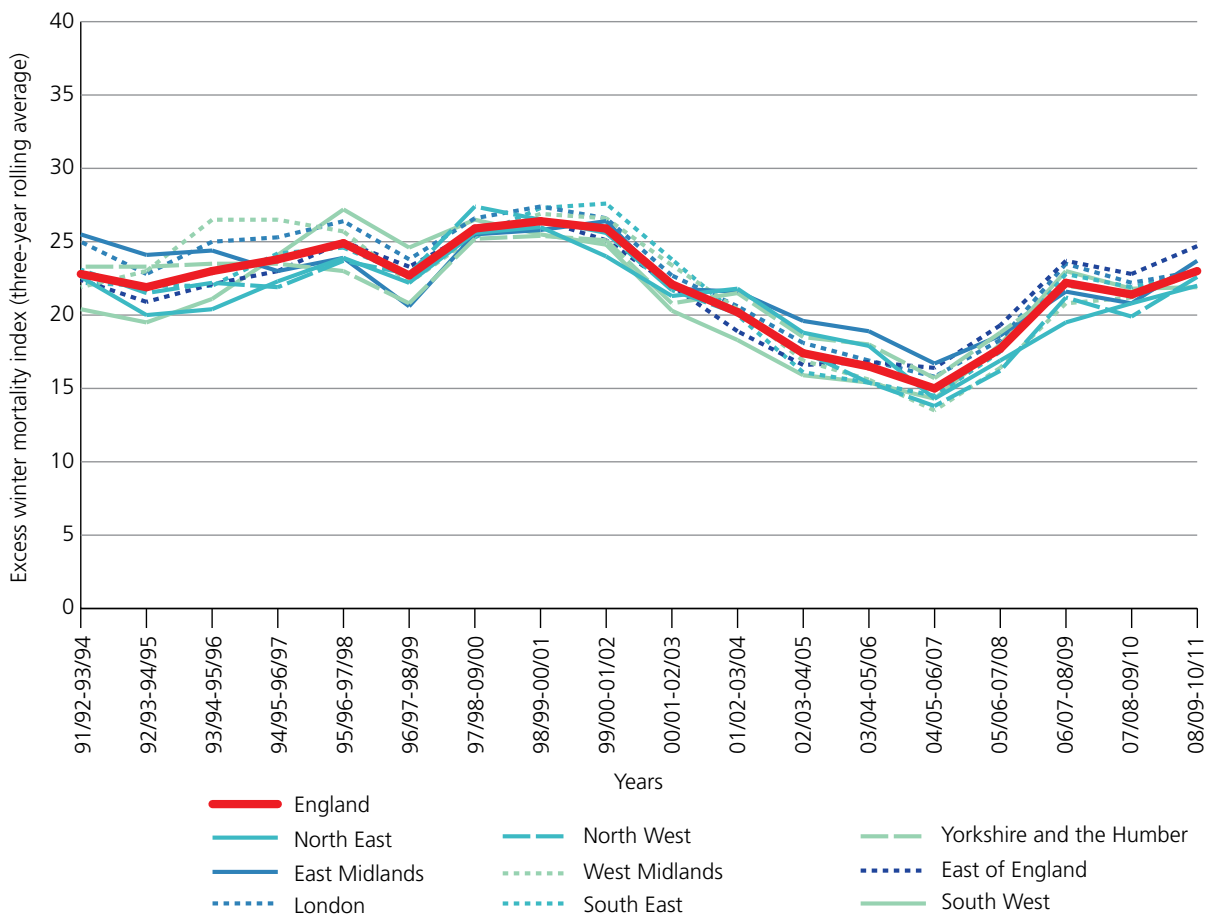
Note: the figure for 2010/11 is provisional.

⁵ Ref 2-1: ONS: Excess winter mortality in England and Wales, 2010/11 (provisional) and 2009/10 (final) – Nov 2011 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health2/excess-winter-mortality-in-england-and-wales/2010-11--provisional--and-2009-10--final/stb-ewm-2010-11.html>

Figure 2.1 shows the trend in the excess winter deaths index for England and the regions over the period 1991/92 to 2010/11. It displays three-year rolling averages to show the underlying pattern more clearly. The index is a simple percentage: over the last 20 years, the average for England has been 18.4, meaning that there have been 18.4% more deaths during the winter period compared with the summer months.

The graph shows that the level of excess winter deaths nationally has remained broadly constant over the last two decades. The index did fall during the mid-2000s, but has risen again to a figure nearer the longer-term average in the most recent years. There are some differences between the regions, but no one area consistently performs better or worse than the others.

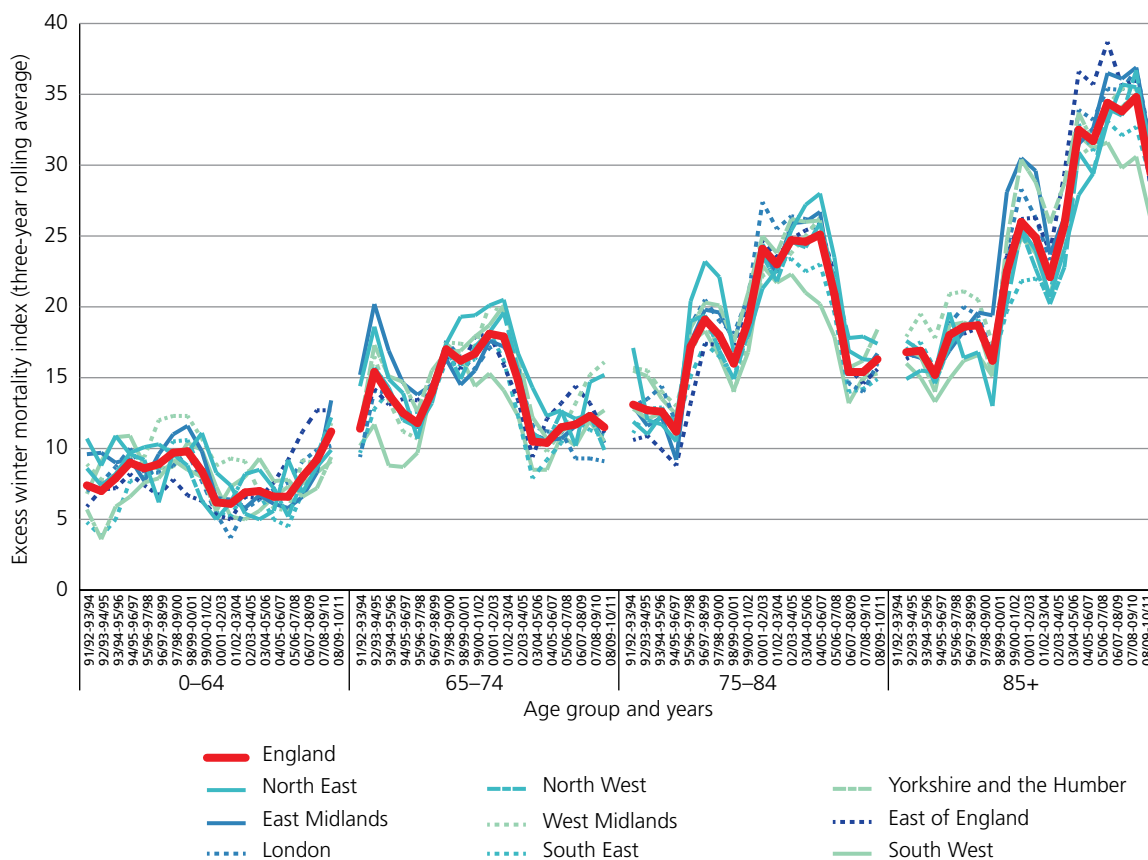
Figure 2.1: Trend in excess winter deaths index, England and regions, three-year rolling average, 1991/02–93/94 to 2008/09–10/11



Source: ONS. Excess winter mortality by age group, region and country of usual residence, England and Wales, 1991/92 to 2010/11.

There are marked differences in the excess winter death index by age group, with the oldest groups tending to have the highest figures. Figure 2.2 shows the three-year rolling average excess deaths index by region and broad age group for the period 1991/92 to 2010/11.

Figure 2.2: Trend in excess winter deaths index by age group, England and regions, three-year rolling average, 1991/02–93/94 to 2008/09–10/11



Source: ONS. Excess winter mortality by age group, region and country of usual residence, England and Wales, 1991/1992 to 2010/11.

Section 3:

What happened in the winter of 2011/12?

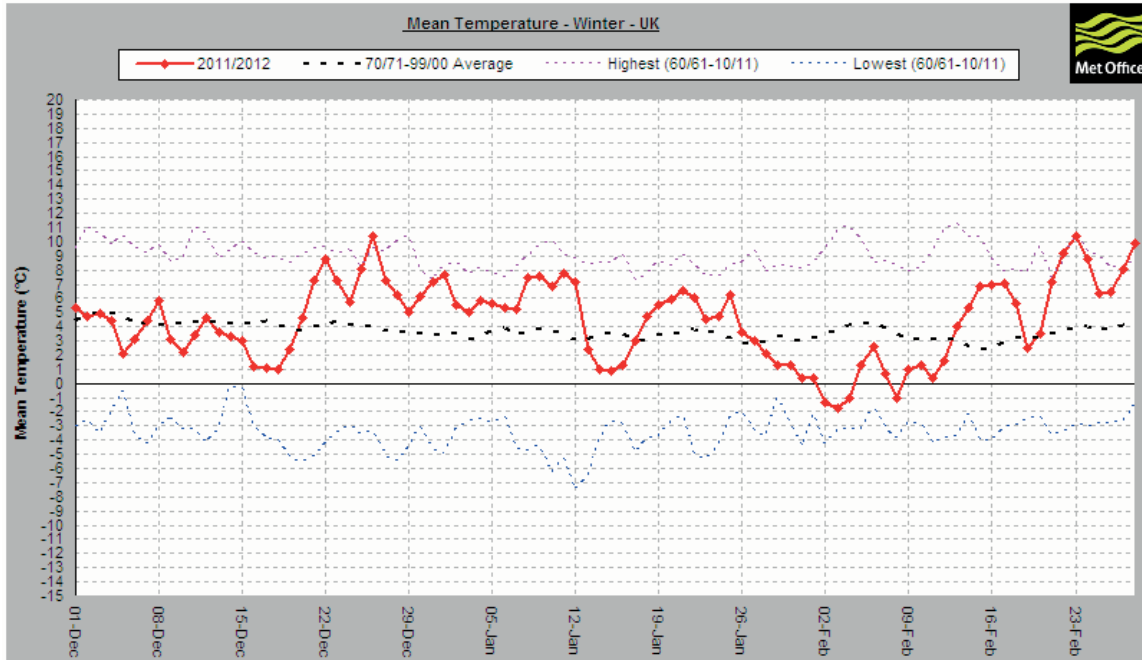
3.1 How did last winter compare with previous winters?

3.1.1 Weather summary

Winter 2011/12 was much milder than winter 2010/11. Mean temperatures over the UK were 0.6°C above average during December 2011, 1.3°C above in January 2012 and 0.7°C above in February 2012. The UK mean temperature for the winter of 2011/12 was 4.5°C, much milder than the last three winters, and comparable with several other mild winters since 2000. December was generally mild, especially across southern areas. After a mostly mild January, the last few days saw the onset of a cold spell that lasted two weeks into the first half of February, with some sharp frosts and snowfalls. The latter half of February was characterised by mild or very mild conditions, and March was even milder with most of the month influenced by high pressure. The provisional UK mean temperature in March was 2.5°C above the 1971/2000 average, ranking third warmest in a series since 1910 and the warmest March since 1957.

Figure 3.1 shows how the mean temperature varied through the winter of 2011/12.

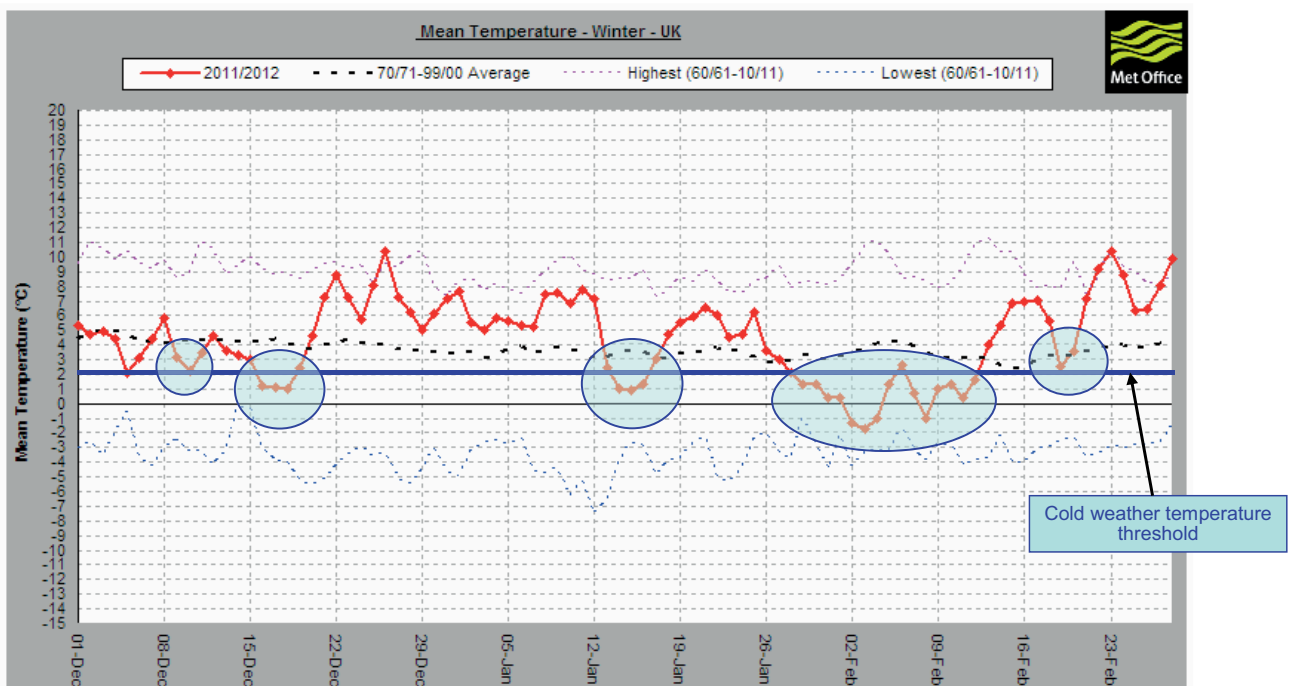
Figure 3.1: Mean temperature variations in the UK for winter 2011/12



3.1.2 Cold Weather Alert summary

There were five periods during the winter when Cold Weather Alerts were issued, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Periods when Cold Weather Alerts were issued



The first two events in December were as a result of cold air that was drawn across England associated with major cyclonic developments during a period of very unsettled weather.

The third period of cold weather, in mid-January, was as a result of cold northerly winds flowing down from the Arctic in the wake of further Atlantic depression systems. These early cold weather events were short-lived and did not lead to major disruption, either from low temperatures, snowfall or widespread ice. However, mean temperatures did fall below, or close to, the cold weather threshold.

The fourth cold weather event, during late January and early February, was much longer and colder and was accompanied by notable snowfall. This change to colder weather started around 28 January and was well predicted by weather forecasting models.

Cold Weather Alerts were issued ahead of, and during, this event. This cold weather event brought sharp frosts, icy roads and some snow, especially to the eastern half of England. Late on 4 February, several centimetres of snow fell widely across central and eastern England with over 12 cm in places. This resulted in travel disruption overnight and into the 5th, notably cancellations and delays to flights from Heathrow, and lengthy delays to traffic on routes such as the M25 and M40. On the 9th, freezing rain fell across northern England causing treacherous conditions on roads and pavements. About 100 road accidents were reported from Cumbria, and hospital emergency departments dealt with hundreds of falls on icy pavements. Further snow fell across central and eastern England later on the 9th. This cold weather lasted until 12 February. There was one final Cold Weather Alert, issued on 17, 18 and 19 February, for northern areas as fronts moved down from the north, with northerly winds bringing wintry showers. Elsewhere, conditions were largely clear and cold, with a return of widespread overnight frosts.

3.2 Long-term climate trends in winter

The climate is changing and current analysis in the first national Climate Change Risk Assessment (UK CCRA 2012) suggests that, as the climate generally becomes more unstable, with increased incidence of heatwaves, flooding and extreme weather events, winters are going to get generally warmer in the future, with continued sharp cold snaps to which we will be less well adapted. Long-term multi-agency planning is now essential to:

- protect people and infrastructure from the effects of extreme weather events (heatwaves, flooding, cold snaps) and severe hot weather, thus reducing excess seasonal illness and death. Health and wellbeing boards could therefore consider resilience to current and future weather events within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs)

- adapt to and reduce the impact of climate change, including greening the built environment to provide protection from flooding and heatwaves; future-proofing building design (e.g. increasing shading around and insulation of buildings); increasing energy efficiency (e.g. reducing carbon emissions); and formulating active transport policies.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is leading the development of a national adaptation programme in response to the CCRA, with 'health and wellbeing' as one of five cross-sector themes. This will be published in 2013 as required by the Climate Change Act 2008.

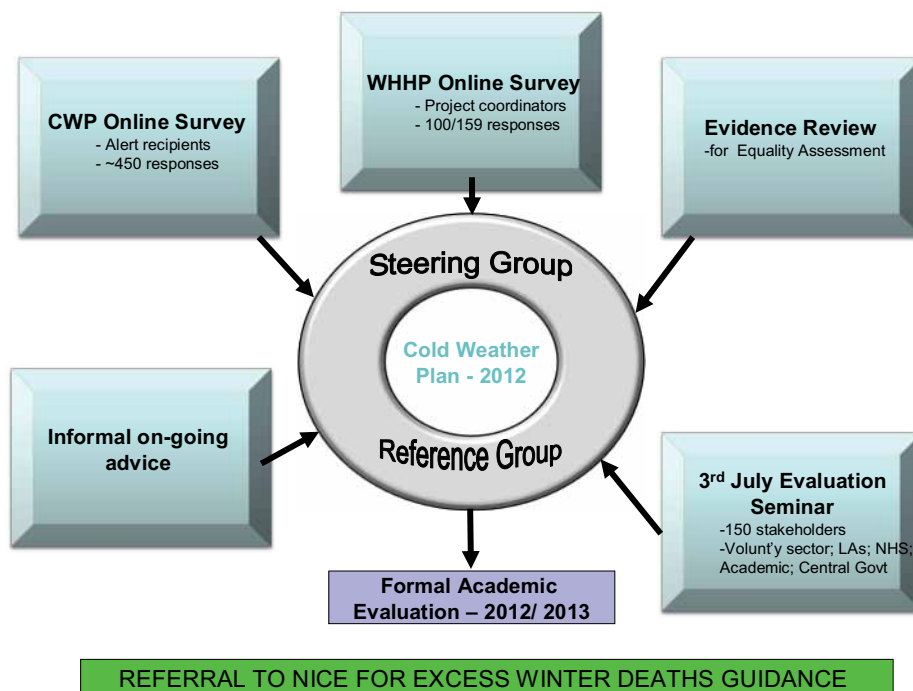
Section 4

Evaluation and amendments to the Cold Weather Plan 2011

The Cold Weather Plan 2011 has been evaluated in a number of ways. The results of this evaluation have been carefully considered and have had a significant impact on the changes which are being adopted for the Cold Weather Plan 2012.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the range of methods which have been used to evaluate the operation of last year's Cold Weather Plan.

Figure 4.1: Methods used to evaluate the Cold Weather Plan 2011



A Steering Group and Reference Group (Annex 1) comprising other government departments and independent agencies have guided and advised the DH on suggested changes. These in turn were based on a number of different inputs into the plan, including:

- an online questionnaire was disseminated via a number of routes, including all recipients of the Cold Weather Alerts. We received nearly 450 responses. Three broad elements were covered, testing awareness, dissemination and implementation of the Cold Weather Plan
- a review of the latest research evidence which might have an impact on the plan was undertaken for the Equality Assessment
- ongoing advice from discussions with colleagues throughout the country.
- a separate multi-pronged evaluation of the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund (including an online questionnaire with lead local authority project coordinators); analysis of more than 40 local evaluation reports; and a number of more detailed focus interviews with staff in more than 10 authorities
- an evaluation seminar on 3 July 2012 with participation of the former Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, and 150 delegates from local health, social care, voluntary and community organisations; and input from academic and other government departments.

4.1 Results of the evaluation

In summary, the results of the evaluation were as follows:

- **The Cold Weather Plan was warmly welcomed.** It had raised public and professional awareness and there was some evidence that organisation behaviour had changed when acting on the plan. Colleagues had generally found the plan useful and easy to understand.
- The dissemination and distribution of the Met Office **Cold Weather Alerts** were working well and reaching key responders.
- **Good partnership working was the key to success.** Existing partnerships should be strengthened and new partnerships built between health, social care, community and voluntary sectors. Those partnerships should include good engagement with local resilience forums and, for the longer-term agenda especially, working with emerging health and wellbeing boards and local health resilience partnerships.
- There was some evidence of change in **organisational and professional behaviours** as a result of the good practice and actions highlighted in the Cold Weather Plan; however, there was still more to be done to ensure that the plan was better embedded as part of mainstream winter preparedness.

- Some **general themes** were highlighted by stakeholders where the Cold Weather Plan could be improved to achieve better impact concerning:
 - **Content and actions:** There is need of further work on tailoring the output of the Cold Weather Plan, in particular the actions and implementation in specific sectors
 - Aspects of the **Cold Weather Alerts** system: These should be reviewed to improve targeting frequency of alerts and revising the thresholds for alerts
 - **Timing:** The Cold Weather Plan should be published as soon as practicable, but with a clear message coming from the DH that planning should not be delayed by waiting for the publication of the 2012 plan.

The full evaluation report which contains questionnaires and seminar summaries has been produced by the Health Protection Agency and can be accessed on the HPA website at: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/EmergencyResponse/ExtremeWeatherEventsAndNaturalDisasters/ColdWeather/ColdWeatherPublications>

The DH has carefully considered these recommendations and believes that the Cold Weather Plan 2012 has taken account of these recommendations.

4.2 Next steps: policy research and NICE guidelines

More recently, the DH Policy Research Programme has commissioned an independent evaluation of the implementation and health related impacts of the Cold Weather Plan by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This study is scheduled to run from autumn 2012 to autumn 2013 and should support the future development of the Cold Weather Plan.

Ministers have made a referral to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to produce public health guidance on the reduction of excess winter deaths. It is anticipated that NICE will commence work in 2013 and that this work will take about 18 months to complete.

4.3 Monitoring and surveillance: role of the Health Protection Agency for 2012/13

The Health Protection Agency (HPA), in collaboration with other agencies, provides both information on mortality and morbidity due to cold weather at each of the severe Cold Weather Alert levels.

4.3.1 Syndromic surveillance

The HPA will routinely monitor outputs from real-time syndromic surveillance systems including calls to NHS Direct, GP out-of-hours/unscheduled care consultations, emergency department attendances, and GP in-hours consultations for the impact of cold-weather-related morbidity using a range of syndromic health indicators. Information on selected cold-related indicators will be included in routine weekly surveillance reports published on the HPA

website (<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/RealtimeSyndromicSurveillance/>); these will provide a source of intelligence on the severity of the effects and how well services are responding.

4.3.2 Mortality surveillance

The HPA will produce weekly excess all-cause mortality estimates based on ONS data during the winter period and publish outputs weekly on the HPA website in the mortality section of the HPA influenza report (link to current weekly report: (http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1287147913271); link to archive of reports: (<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza/EpidemiologicalData/05influsWeeklyinfluenzareportsarchive/>))

4.3.3 Summaries from winter 2011/12

Summaries from both surveillance teams can be accessed in the HPA's evaluation report of the Cold Weather Plan (http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317136356328)

Section 5:

Cold Weather Alerts and other Met Office services

Cold Weather Alerts are consistent with other weather warnings issued by the Met Office. The only difference is that the Cold Weather Alerts include a temperature threshold. The Met Office's **National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS)** already warns relevant organisations about a range of high-impact winter weather events, including heavy rain, heavy snow, strong winds, fog and widespread ice. This service operates year round across the UK and is based on the Met Office NSWWS regions. Figure 5.1 illustrates the linkages between these services and other planning advice notifications sent by the Met Office.

Figure 5.1: Met Office services and notifications

Service	Purpose	Distribution	Timing
Cold Weather Alerts	To provide early warning of low temperature and or widespread ice/heavy snow. The alert levels have been set with thresholds known to cause ill health from severe cold weather. They are to help ensure that healthcare staff and resources are fully prepared for cold weather periods that might impact on health and to raise awareness for those individuals who are more vulnerable to cold weather conditions.	Email	Alert issued as soon as agreed threshold has been reached and when there is a change in alert level. Issued between 1 November and 31 March
Cold weather planning advice	To provide advice throughout the winter period relating to low temperatures or widespread ice/heavy snow	Email	Twice a week (9am each Monday and Friday from 1 November to 31 March)
National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS)	To provide warnings of severe or hazardous weather that has the potential to cause danger to life or widespread disruption. These warnings are issued to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the public, to prompt consideration of actions they may need to take emergency responders, to trigger their plans to protect the public from impacts in advance of an event, and to help them recover from any impacts after the event 	Email, web, SMS, TV, radio	When required
General weather forecast	To enable the UK public to make informed decisions about their day-to-day activities	Web, TV, radio	Every day


5.1 Other changes to the Cold Weather Alert service

In response to comments from stakeholders, we are making a number of changes to the Cold Weather Alert service for the winter 2012/13. From this year, Cold Weather Alerts will:

- be colour-coded to indicate more easily the NSWWS regions affected by a change from one Cold Weather Alert level to another (e.g. from Level 2 to Level 3). This will help responders to clarify what actions in turn need to be taken
- published and sent by the Met Office at 09:00 rather than 10:00 to aid planners
- indicate which local resilience forum (LRF) is situated within the NSWWS region, in order to help responders. However, for this year it is not possible to increase the 'granularity' of the alert to an LRF area, but this is something we may be able to include in the future
- include a link to Met Office and weather pattern maps
- use social media (e.g. Twitter/Facebook). The alerts are already backed up by tweets, linking to the alert webpage through the Met Office twitter feed. You can subscribe to this feed by following: @metoffice. (<http://twitter.com/metoffice>)

5.2 Example of a Cold Weather Alert 2012/13

Figure 5.2 is an example of what a typical Cold Weather Alert will now look like.



Cold Weather Alert

Tel: 087 0 900 0100 www.metoffice.gov.uk Page 1 of 2

NHS (Ref: MO43) |

Forecast issued on <{0,dddd}>, <{0,dd}> <{0,mmmm}> <{0,yyyy}> at 17:14

Cold Weather Alert

Level 3 – Severe Weather Action

The Level 3 alert has been issued because of the forecasted frosty nights and low daytime temperatures have occurred, as forecast. We have already seen temperatures as low as -6.2°C in Pershore, Worcestershire, -6.1°C in South Famborough, Hampshire and -5.7°C in Hum, Dorset this week and the Level 3 Alert is expected to remain in force until the weekend.

This is a Level 3 alert for the areas identified in the table below. Please refer to the national Cold Plan and your Trust's emergency plan for appropriate preventative action.

Level 2 – Alert and Readiness

There is a 60% probability of extreme cold weather and icy conditions between 0001 Sunday and 2359 Tuesday in parts of England. This weather could increase the health risks of vulnerable patients and disrupt the delivery of services.

This is a Level 2 alert for the areas identified in the table below. Please refer to the national Cold Plan and your Trust's emergency plan for appropriate preventive action.

An update will be issued by 1000 on <{1,dddd}> <{1,dd}> <{1,mmmm}> <{1,yyyy}>.

Regional Risk assessments for occurrence of cold weather conditions between 1500 on Saturday and 1500 on Tuesday.

The areas that are likely to be affected are:

Region	Risk	Comments
North East England	40%	Strong North Easterly winds will lead to significant windchill
North West England	50%	Strong North Easterly winds will lead to significant windchill
Yorkshire and the Humber	40%	Strong North Easterly winds will lead to significant windchill
West Midlands	100%	Widespread low daytime and overnight minima possible
East Midlands	40%	Low overnight minima possible in rural areas
East of England	40%	Low overnight minima possible in rural areas
Southeast England	100%	Widespread low daytime and overnight minima possible
London	20%	Area of London will be less cold
South West England	100%	Widespread low daytime and overnight minima possible

KEY

- Winter preparedness (Level 1)
- Alert and Readiness (Level 2)
- Severe Weather Action (Level 3)
- Emergency Response (Level 4)

General Comments:- High pressure over Scandinavia will allow much colder air to spread in from the continent over the next few days. The coldest conditions will be across Southwest England, the Midlands and into eastern Wales. Maximum temperatures will be below 3°C in places with minima of around -8°C in outlying areas, with mean temperature expected to be below 1°C widely.

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For updated seasonal flu and syndromic surveillance bulletins from the Health Protection Agency, please follow the links below:

HPA Weekly National Influenza Report-

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza/EpidemiologicalData/03influsweeklyreportpdfonly/>

HPA Real-time Syndromic Surveillance Bulletins -

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/RealtimeSyndromicSurveillance/>

The DH Cold Weather Plan can be accessed at the following link:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_130564

To aid local planning, listed below are the Local Resilience Forum (LRFs) matched against their regions.

NHS Region	NSWW Region	Local Resilience Forum
North	North East England	Durham and Darlington Northumbria Cleveland
	Yorkshire and the Humber	Humber North Yorkshire West Yorkshire South Yorkshire
	North West England	Cheshire Cumbria Greater Manchester Lancashire Merseyside
Midlands	West Midlands	Staffordshire Warwickshire West Mercia West Midlands
	East Midlands	Derbyshire Leicestershire Lincolnshire Northamptonshire Nottinghamshire
	East of England	Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Essex Hertfordshire Norfolk Suffolk
South	South East England	Sussex Kent Surrey Thames Valley Hampshire and Isle of Wight
	South West England	Avon & Somerset Devon, Cornwall & Isle of Scilly Dorset Gloucestershire Wiltshire and Swindon
London	London	London

5.3 Public health core messages

These are the public health core messages that would be broadcast as official Department of Health warnings alongside national and regional weather forecasts. They may be expanded or otherwise refined in discussion with broadcasters and weather presenters.

Level 1: Winter preparedness

This is in force throughout the winter from 1 November to 31 March and indicates that preparations should be in place to protect health and ensure service continuity in the event of severe cold and winter weather. No warning required unless the situation worsens to warrant a Level 2 alert. A spell of chilly weather might warrant a message along the lines of:

'If this does turn out to be a spell of severe cold weather, we'll try to give you as much warning as possible. But in the meantime, if you are worried about what to do, either for yourself or somebody you know who you think might be at risk, for advice go to the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/winterhealth. Alternatively ring NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.'

Level 2: Alert and readiness

The Met Office, in conjunction with the Department of Health, is issuing the following cold weather warning for [regions identified]. A Level 2 alert is issued when a mean temperature of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are predicted within 48 hours, with 60% confidence. The message would be:

'Severe cold weather can be dangerous, especially for the very young or very old or those with chronic disease. Advice on how to reduce the risk either for yourself or somebody you know can be obtained from the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/winterhealth. Alternatively ring NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or contact your local GP or pharmacist.'

Levels 3 and 4: Severe weather action/national emergency

The Met Office, in conjunction with the Department of Health, is issuing the following severe cold weather advice for [regions identified]:

'Make sure that you stay warm. If going outside make sure you dress appropriately. If indoors, make sure that you keep your heating to the right temperature (18°C/65°F (bedroom) – 21°C/70°F (dayroom)). If there's anybody you know who might be at special risk (for example, an older person living on their own), make sure they know what to do to stay warm and are well stocked with food and medications.'

5.4 Severe cold weather and Cold Weather Alerts – definitions

Heavy snow – Snow falling at a rate of at least 2 cm/hour or more which is expected to fall for at least 2 hours. Geographic extent is not considered, and sometimes the event can be quite localised, but the Met Office will always try to indicate which area will be affected in the bulletin.

Widespread ice – Ice formed when rain falls onto surfaces with temperatures at or below zero; or condensation occurs on surfaces at or below zero; or already wet surfaces fall to or below zero. The ice is usually clear and difficult to distinguish from a wet surface. It usually forms in sheets. Warnings are issued when any depth of ice is expected over a widespread area. Warnings will also be issued after snowfall when compacted snow is expected to cause an ice risk.

Widespread – The term 'widespread' indicates that icy surfaces will be found extensively over the area defined by the Met Office in the bulletin.

The Met Office issues all of these alerts down to a county level, so either of the warnings above could be issued even if only one county was likely to be affected.

Section 6:

Advice for the public about winter warmth benefits

We are committed to helping people, especially low-income and vulnerable households, heat their homes more affordably. The Government therefore provides a range of policies to help eligible households improve their energy efficiency and reduce their energy bills.

You may be able to get financial and practical help to heat your home more affordably. Help available includes Warm Front, the Warm Home Discount Scheme, and, from early 2013, the Energy Company Obligation.

The **Warm Front** scheme offers grants for heating and insulation improvements up to £3,500 (or up to £6,000 if your home is not connected to the mains gas grid), for private-sector households in receipt of certain benefits. From 12 September 2012 the eligibility criteria for Warm Front changed allowing even more people access to the help available. To find out if you qualify, call a Warm Front adviser free on 0800 316 2805 (lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and Saturdays from 9am to 5pm) or visit the Warm Front website: www.direct.gov.uk/warmfront

From early 2013, energy efficiency measures will be available through the new **Energy Company Obligation**. For people in receipt of particular means-tested benefits and tax credits there will be free or heavily subsidised support for boiler repairs or replacements, and a range of insulation measures. To qualify you must be a homeowner or live in private rental accommodation.

If you live in a property suitable for solid wall or certain types of cavity wall insulation, you may also be eligible for assistance. If your home is suitable, you could have access to a wider range of insulation measures and advice.

To find more, including which suppliers have opened their schemes and what type of support you could be eligible for, please contact the independent Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234.

The **Warm Home Discount Scheme** is a four-year scheme that commenced in April 2011 to help low-income and vulnerable households with energy costs. There are two key elements to the scheme. The first element, the Core Group, is that a discount of £130 may be paid to those in receipt of pension credit guarantee credit, but not the savings element (or those aged 80 and over who receive guarantee credit and savings credit) on the qualifying date of 21 July 2012, and who are named on their electricity bill with a participating supplier. Credits will be applied over the course of winter 2012/13.

Those eligible need not apply. Limited data sharing between the Department for Work and Pensions and energy suppliers should enable rebates to be paid automatically in the majority of cases. If a consumer qualifies, but an automatic rebate can't be made, they will receive a letter from the Government asking them to provide further information to a dedicated call centre. This information will be available on their electricity bill. Customers will need to contact the centre by 13 March to claim. More information is available at www.direct.gov.uk/warmhome

If a consumer is receiving the guarantee credit element of pension credit but not the savings credit element, or is 80 or over and receiving both, please visit www.direct.gov.uk/warmhome for up-to-date information on the scheme.

The second element of the scheme, the Broader Group, requires participating electricity suppliers to provide discounts of £130 off electricity bills to a small number of groups whom they class as vulnerable. For example, people who are on a low income with a disability, long-term illness or those with children. These schemes are available directly from energy suppliers. Further information and contact email/telephone addresses for participating electricity suppliers is available at: www.decc.gov.uk/warmhome

Winter fuel payments from £100 to £300 for winter 2012/13 may be available if you were born on or before 5 July 1951. If you receive state pension or certain other benefits you should be paid automatically and do not need to claim. The payment is paid each winter and you do not need to reapply if your circumstances do not change.

If you do not currently receive a winter fuel payment and think you may be eligible, you can find out more at www.direct.gov.uk/winterfuel or call 08459 151515 (8.30am–4.30pm Monday–Friday, textphone 0845 601 5613).

Cold weather payments are available to you if you receive pension credit and may be available to you if you receive certain benefits and are disabled or have a child who is disabled or under the age of five. The Government has increased this support permanently to £25 for each qualifying period of cold weather. To find out more about cold weather payments, visit www.direct.gov.uk/coldweatherpayment

For more information and advice on your health and wellbeing in winter, visit NHS Choices on:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/keepwarmkeepwell.aspx>

Additional information on help with heating costs is provided by charitable organisations such as National Energy Action (www.nea.org.uk/useful-phone-numbers/), Citizens Advice (www.citizensadvice.org.uk or call 08444 111 444 or check your local bureau's contact details) and Age UK (www.ageuk.org.uk/money-matters/claiming-benefits/heating-benefits/ or call 0800 169 6565

Section 7:

Warm Homes Healthy People: data-sharing for better health

7.1 Warm Homes Healthy People Fund 2011/12: local authority scheme

An independent 'process' evaluation was carried out by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) from June to August 2012, aimed to assess how the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund was implemented by local authorities in England in 2011/12, in order to share examples of good practice and make recommendations for the future.

From the survey results it is estimated that:

- 130,000– 200,000 residents in England received interventions delivered to their homes
- Of these, 62% were older adults (>75)
- 9,000–15,000 residents received training (to understand the impacts of cold weather and protective measures)
- 30,000– 47,000 residents received benefits advice
- 1–1.4 million residents received booklets/leaflets
- 5,300–9,700 staff/volunteers received fuel poverty/cold weather awareness training

The evaluation of the of the local authority element of the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund has indicated that:

- There has been universal support for the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund
- Strong support for a further year's continuation of the Fund – with an equally strong request for earlier notification if there was to be such a fund
- Authorities generally appreciated the wide degree of freedom they had to develop locally applicable plans and the general lack of central prescription
- The Fund supported the development of, or helped strengthen, existing partnerships to tackle cold weather and cold housing

- The voluntary sector was very supportive of the initiative and was actively engaged in all areas in developing and delivering plans (in a way which exceeded our expectations)
- There is now a challenge to turn last year's projects into an ongoing sustainable service
- Local colleagues are keen to share good practice and learn lessons from across the country.

In the light of these results, ministers have recently announced that there will be another Warm Homes Healthy People Fund for 2012/13 (Ref 6-1)⁶.

Much was achieved during the winter of 2011/12, despite challenging timescales. This may have been due to excellent partnerships, reduced bureaucracy and increased delivery, and building on existing work in the area.

A wide range of interventions was implemented by local projects. Case study examples of successful interventions include providing a 'home check', providing an emergency repair service, providing loft/cavity wall insulation, providing benefits advice, providing 'fuel vouchers', delivering duvets and supporting a local 'knitting group'.

Awareness-raising was a central component of all local Warm Homes Healthy People Fund projects, with **100% of survey respondents launching a local media campaign**, most commonly by newspaper. Case study examples of successful awareness-raising campaigns suggest the following useful components: a multi-faceted approach using a wide range of media; conducting fuel poverty awareness training to residents and staff; and using a clear brand image.

Excellent partnership working was a universal theme, and there were many examples of the **good use of volunteers**.

There was also scope for improvement. There could have been better **targeting of the most vulnerable residents**. Case study examples of ways in which the most vulnerable residents could be targeted include the use of fuel poverty maps, house energy efficiency data, health risk stratification data and the use of data sharing agreements. It was felt that **better engagement with healthcare professionals was needed**. The **single point of referral** was seen as a useful method to coordinate services.

A summary of all projects that were funded can be found on Warm Homes Healthy People – Sharing Good Practice on the Local Government Association (LGA), Knowledge Hub website. A web-based platform for better-sharing information and establishing cross-authority dialogue to learn from each other and share experiences can be found at: <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk>

⁶ Ref 6-1. Department of Health. Warm Homes Healthy People Fund 2012/ 2013. LAC(DH) (2012)2. <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/lac-whhp-fund/>

Figure 7.1 summarises some of the main interventions that were funded by local authorities in 2011/12.

Further detailed information and case studies about the evaluation can be accessed on the HPA website at: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/EmergencyResponse/ExtremeWeatherEventsAndNaturalDisasters/ColdWeather/ColdWeatherPublications>

Figure 7.1: Examples of Warm Homes Healthy People Fund interventions

Interventions	Examples
Helpline & Single point contact referrals	Telephone advice lines for housing, support and fuel poverty queries. Often directing individuals and professionals to sources of further help and benefits. Organisations found it useful to report back to shadow HWBB. Suggestions on independent professional line to aid tailored advice and rapid referral (e.g. for busy GPs). Line must be single point and simple so it is accessible and effective. Single point of contact also used for letter/fax/email to refer clients who could then be entered onto database and followed up. Single point contact could be housing association or community centre for sharing of information.
Heaters and home checks	Gas fire safety checks and repairs, boiler checks and repairs, home energy checks, explanation of heating systems to clients, help in refunding bills, emergency heating advice and provision and loft clearance
Packs	Cold weather prevention packs, winter warmth packs and toolkits. Packs included resource packs, hot water bottles with messages and blankets. Helpful to share experience and advice between Authorities on the content, procurement, suppliers and storage facilities related to organising these packs.
Training	DVDs which aided the voluntary and community sector participants. Red Cross cold weather specific first aid training for district nurses and people in communities. Training of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, through peer support groups delivering specific educational advice.
Grants	Small grants to individuals for minor improvements to homes. Donations from local companies to help improve access for professionals to reach vulnerable groups (e.g. snow equipment, snow tyres and pavement gritters)
Food delivery	Free hot meals and referrals to meals on wheels
Home visits	By both voluntary, health and community sector workers to distribute thermometers, give advice, deliver energy meters, check smoke alarms
Advice	Key community buildings with access to community workers have extended opening hours. Mobile advice units giving information on fuel and benefits. Organisations providing relevant advice brought together to form partnerships.
Community Champions	To help achieve the aims and objectives of the CWP. Embed this role within local communities.

This list highlights a number of projects but does not aim to be an exhaustive list. For a more comprehensive summary of interventions, the WHHP fund evaluation will be published shortly on the HPA website

7.2 Data-sharing for better health

Some of the feedback from the Warm Homes Healthy People projects pointed to the challenges of data-sharing between agencies at two levels:

- **Population level:** Sharing data between agencies who know about poor housing stock condition and those who know about vulnerable people living in the community but not necessarily their housing conditions
- **Individual level:** Sometimes a range of different professionals supporting individuals know that a person is living in a cold house, but there aren't clear arrangements for either the sharing of information between professionals or clear guidelines as to where to refer that person onwards to maximise support which might be available.

The benefits of greater sharing of information between agencies are clear, especially when it can result in better care, or warmer houses, for the clients or patients and families involved. However, there are complex issues related to information governance between agencies, although informed patient consent is crucial. A number of areas have developed useful protocols to support data-sharing.

These information governance issues have taken on a wider significance with the transfer of public health functions from the NHS to local authorities from April 2013. The Department of Health has published a factsheet⁷ summarising the health intelligence requirements for local authorities to support the delivery of their new responsibilities for protecting and improving public health, and describing the issues they will need to address, including:

- access to relevant health and social care data and evidence
- provision of specialist health intelligence skills and capacity
- governance of any confidential information used for health intelligence.

This factsheet will be supported by further publications clarifying the mechanisms for safely and securely sharing information between the NHS and local authorities to improve the commissioning and delivery of care services to those whose health is at risk from severe winter weather.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 provide two case studies showing how at least two areas have worked in partnership to improve referrals across agencies. Many more examples can be found on the Knowledge Hub website noted above.

⁷ Ref 6-2 Department of Health. Local public health intelligence Factsheets. Sept 2012. <https://www.wp.dh.gov.uk/publications/files/2012/09/Public-health-intelligence-all-factsheets.pdf>

Figure 7.2: Case study: Targeting using a health risk stratification tool**Targeting using a health risk stratification tool**

Kirklees 'Warm People in Warm Homes' project utilised the Kirklees NHS Predictive Risk Toolkit to target the most health vulnerable residents. This toolkit has been used by NHS Kirklees since 2009, with agreement from almost all local GP practices, providing risk stratification for 98.8% of Kirklees residents.

Partners decided to target the most vulnerable 1% (in terms of risk of hospital admission in the next 12 months) as part of their original mailshot. The chairs of the Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Groups were approached and asked for their backing to ask GPs to send out patient letters explaining the project and informing them of the telephone helpline should they want a warmth pack, advice or further help. The NHS-encrypted numbers of the 1% most vulnerable were given to the GP practices to address and post the letters, with an incentive payment of 10p per letter. If an identified vulnerable resident was also under the care of Locala (community health provider), the mailshot was undertaken by Locala and not their GP. A total of 2,020 letters were sent out by GPs and 800 by Locala. In addition, 735 letters were sent out to residents supported by the council's adult service home carer services, and 245 residents living in council houses (managed by Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing) were also targeted.

There was an overall response rate of around 21.5%. This was also supported in the number of respondents to the GP mail-out (413). The source of each letter can be identified as a unique reference number was given and should have been quoted when calling the helpline.

Ref: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/EmergencyResponse/ExtremeWeatherEventsAndNaturalDisasters/ColdWeather/ColdWeatherPublications>

Figure 7.3: Case study: Blackpool Counter Attack

Blackpool's Counter Attack service was initiated in 2006 as a two-year project. Counter Attack was funded and delivered by a partnership of agencies including NHS Blackpool, Blackpool Council, Age Concern and ScottishPower Energy People Trust. Using outreach workers, the aim was to identify and understand the assumed barriers that prevent vulnerable households taking up available measures to combat fuel poverty. The service also aimed to recommend where provider agencies needed to re-focus their work to overcome these barriers.

It became apparent early in the project that the service could not ignore residents' immediate heating needs, so provision of remedial measures was added to the project. Over the initial two years, completed interventions resulted in an increase of uptake of existing measures to a value of £253,824, plus additional income benefits and allowances awarded to vulnerable residents totalling £1.1 million. As a result of the achievements of the pilot, the scheme was extended and mainstreamed.

Since the beginning of 2010, Counter Attack (rebranded as Warmth for Wellbeing) has been managed and delivered by Blackpool Council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Care & Repair. The combination of the HIA's 'no wrong door' ethos and wide range of contacts in the private, voluntary and third sectors has led to closer working relationships and simple and innovative pathways into the service for professionals and residents alike.

In 2010/11, as well as facilitating an estimated £800,000 in additional income benefits and more than £360,000 in heating and insulation measures, evaluation of a sample of clients demonstrated a small but statistically significant improvement in self-reported 'Quality of Life' indicators.

Blackpool Counter Attack (and its successor Warmth for Wellbeing) is a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of local partnerships and sustained investment in improving the lives of Blackpool's most vulnerable residents.

For more information, please contact Anne McDowall, Service Manager Blackpool Care & Repair, 01253 651555, anne.mcdowall@blackpool.gov.uk or Christine Smith, Community Energy Coordinator 01253 476340 christine.j.smith@blackpool.gov.uk

Annex 1:

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Produced in association
with the Met Office

Over the last decade, the average number of excess winter deaths in England has been just over 25,000 a year, many of which could be avoided by taking simple preventive actions. This plan is intended to mobilise action to reduce winter deaths by a range of NHS, social care, community and voluntary organisations, as well as by individuals. For a review of the evidence supporting this plan, see *Supporting the Case* at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/tag/cold-weather-plan/> and *Making the Case: Why cold weather planning is essential to health and well-being*, at: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_130564