

Cold Weather - Be Prepared

11th November 2016

Dear Colleagues

We are now heading into Winter with changeable weather, temperatures dropping and some areas already experiencing very cold weather and snow.

We are contacting you to ask that you are now prepared for cold weather and are very grateful for your support to ensure the mitigation of risks to health that the cold weather poses. This is particularly for the most vulnerable people we work with, such as the very old, the very young and those with chronic illnesses.

You can check here for daily information on weather alerts from the Met Office to keep up to date:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/cold-weather-alert/#?tab=coldWeatherAlert>

Cold kills, even in places where temperatures are not at their lowest. Most of the health impacts caused by cold weather occur at moderate outdoor temperatures of between 4°C and 8°C.

We would like to ask you to prepare for the cold weather period by taking the following actions:

- Make sure that staff members/volunteers have identified all those vulnerable to cold weather and that arrangements are in place to support and protect them appropriately
- Ensure staff /volunteers are prepared to undertake appropriate checks when attending to individuals, e.g. room temperature (18°C minimum both during the day and at night); ensuring sufficient supply of medications and food, and that individuals have an emergency contact number available. Prepare to arrange daily contacts/visits to those who are most vulnerable, and ensure signposting to appropriate services for those who are in need.
- Ensure business continuity plans are in place, and that services are equipped to cope with surges in demand. Make sure that the best use can be made of capacity in services.

- Please see key public health messages outlined in the blue boxes below, as well as links to the Stay Well in Winter campaign materials. Please ensure all staff /volunteers are familiar with these messages and reinforcing them **at this stage** with all customers/service users/patients. Further messages to give include: ensuring that people check in on vulnerable neighbours and support them with clearing snow and ice from driveways and walkways to allow access during periods of bad weather; and making sure people dress for the weather and avoid exposing themselves to cold or icy conditions if they are at higher risk of cold-related illness or falls
- If you are concerned about somebody who is unable to adequately heat their home, for advice about keeping energy bills down, benefits entitlements and qualification for loft and cavity wall insulation and other heating measures (please note these are not emergency numbers):

Coventry - ring The Affordable Warmth Team on 024 7683 2330

Warwickshire - ring The Act on Energy helpline 0800 988 2881.

We would be grateful if you could cascade this information to all your staff.

Stay well this winter advice:

<http://www.nhs.uk/staywell/>

You can find further information on our council websites: www.coventry.gov.uk and

www.warwickshire.gov.uk or our emergency planning website

<http://www.cswprepared.org.uk/home>

All national flu leaflets can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>

With many thanks for your hard work and support,



Dr John Linnane
Director of Public Health,
Warwickshire County Council



Dr Jane Moore
Director of Public Health
Coventry City Council

Key Public Health Messages

Contact your GP or Pharmacist if you, or someone you care for, qualifies for a free flu vaccine.



One in three people in Coventry and Warwickshire are entitled to a free flu vaccination this winter.

- People **aged 65 years or over** (including those becoming age 65 years by 31 March 2017)
- All **pregnant women** (including those women who become pregnant during the flu season)
- **Children or adults** with a serious medical condition such as:
 - Chronic respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis
 - Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - Chronic kidney disease at stage 3, 4 or 5
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease
- People who have had a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA or 'mini-stroke')
- Diabetes
- Weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
- People without a spleen or problems with the spleen
- **Carers** (main carer of an older or disabled person)
- People living in **long stay residential care homes** or long-stay care facilities
- A nasal vaccination is available for all children aged 2, 3 and 4 years
- All children in Years 1, 2 and 3 will be offered a vaccination through school

Contact your GP or Pharmacy today.

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/flu
www.coventry.gov.uk/flujab



Key Public Health Messages

Keep your home warm, efficiently and safely

- Heating your home to 18°C in winter poses minimal risk to your health when you are wearing suitable clothing.
- Get your heating system and cooking appliances checked and keep your home well ventilated.
- Use your electric blanket as instructed and get it tested every three years. Never use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket.
- Do not use a gas oven or cooker to heat your home, it is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, which can kill.
- Make sure you have a supply of heating oil or LPG or solid fuel if you are not on mains gas or electricity to make sure you do not run out in winter

Keep in the warmth by

- Fitting draught proofing to seal any gaps around windows and doors
- Make sure you have loft insulation. If you have cavity walls make sure they are insulated too.
- Insulate your hot water cylinder and pipes
- Draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat generated inside your rooms
- Make sure your radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains.

Look after yourself

- Food is a vital source of energy and helps keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks
- Aim to include five portions of fruits and vegetables. Tinned and frozen vegetables count toward your five a day
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't need to go out too much when it's cold and icy.
- Exercise is good for you all year round and it can keep you warm in winter
- If possible, try to move around at least once an hour, but remember to speak to your GP before starting any exercise plans
- Wear lots of thin layers- clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and maintain body heat.
- Wear good fitting slippers with a grip indoors and shoes with a good grip outside to prevent trips slips and falls.
- Make sure you have spare medication in case you are unable to go out
- Check if you are eligible for inclusion on the **priority services register**, operated by your water and power supplier

Key Public Health Messages

Look after Others

- Check on older neighbours or relatives, especially those living alone or who have serious illnesses to make sure they are safe, warm and well.

Get Financial Support

- There are grants, benefits and advice to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It's worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to before winter sets in.