



UK Health
Security
Agency

Winter Risks and Resources Webinar for London's Communities 2025

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Overview

Health impacts

- Direct and indirect effects of cold weather
- What happens during cold weather?
- Cold weather and winter respiratory viruses
- Keeping warm and well

Preparedness tools

- Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP) and guidance
- Cold Health Alerts
- Voluntary and community sector action card

Communications resources

- Cold weather communications toolkit 2025/26
- Links to resources for you and your network





The direct and indirect effects of cold weather



Exposure to cold weather can affect your health in different ways, even at temperatures as mild as 4 to 8 °C

Direct effects



- **heart attack**
- **stroke**
- **increased risk** of respiratory disease

- **weakened lung function** causing an increased risk of influenza
- **falls** and injuries
- **hypothermia**

Indirect effects

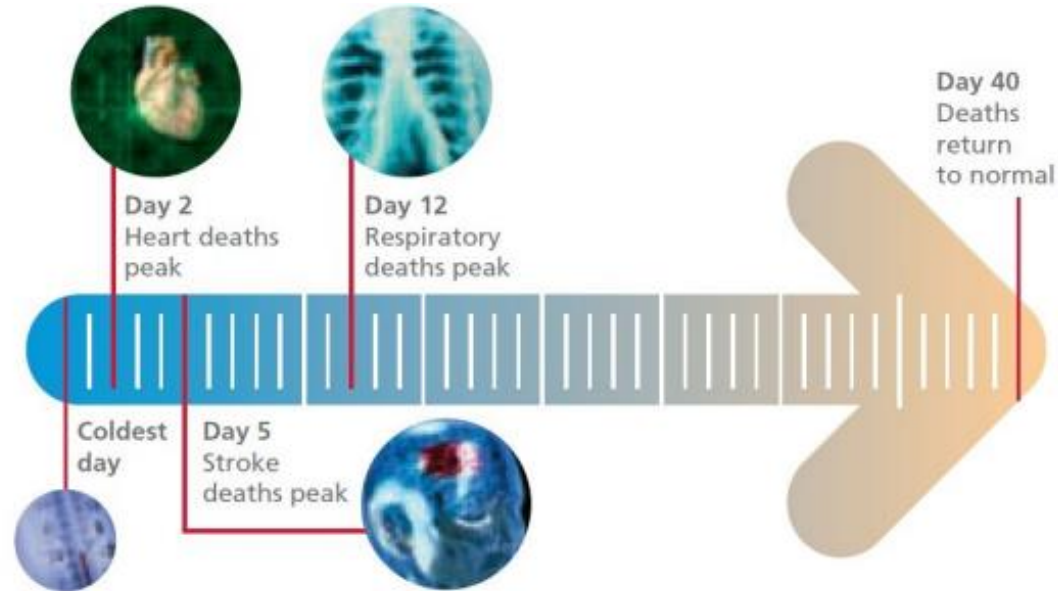


- **disruption to healthcare services** caused by snow and ice
- **carbon monoxide** poisoning
- **poorer mental health** and reduced educational and employment attainment have been linked to cold homes and fuel poverty



What happens during cold weather?

Deaths caused by cardiovascular conditions peak first followed by stroke and then respiratory.



Reference: 2009 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer. Original source: Donaldson GC, Keatinge WR. Early increases in ischaemic heart disease mortality dissociated from and later changes associated with respiratory mortality after cold weather in south east England. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 1997 Dec;51(6):643-8.



Snow and ice also cause:

- disruption to service provision
- reduction in access to essential services
- increase in the risk of falls and injuries

Cold weather and winter respiratory viruses

Although COVID-19 mortality is down from previous years as expected, influenza and other winter respiratory viruses continue to present significant risk to vulnerable populations.

Exposure to winter respiratory viruses increases in the winter because:

- reduced ventilation of indoor spaces
- cold weather reduces effectiveness of the natural immune system
- increased socialisation in confined spaces



Early flu season



Who is eligible for the flu vaccine this year?

From 1 September 2025:

- pregnant women
- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2025
- Children with certain long-term health conditions (aged 6 months to less than 18 years)
- primary school aged children (from reception to Year 6)
- secondary school aged children (from Year 7 to Year 11)
- all children in clinical risk groups aged from 6 months to under 18 years

From 1 October 2025 :

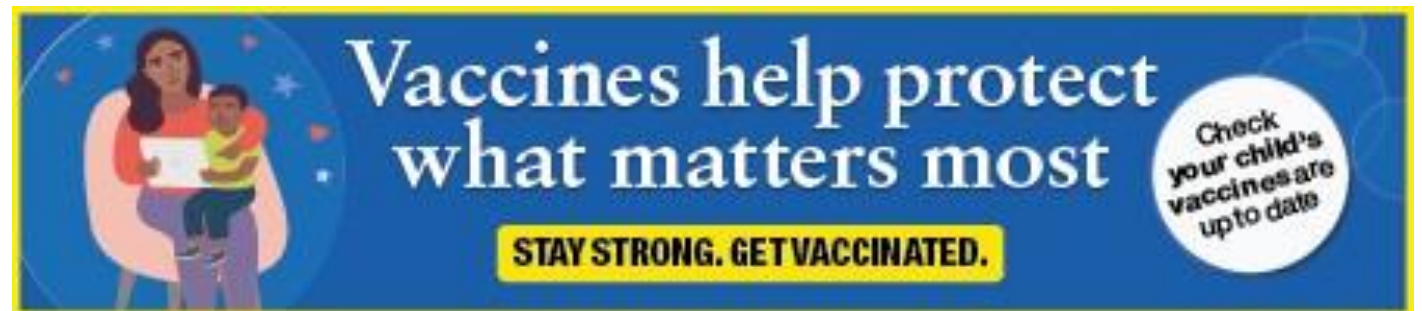
- everyone aged 65 years and over
- individuals aged 18 to under 65 with certain long-term health conditions
- care home residents
- carers in receipt of carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- those living with people who are immunocompromised
- frontline health and social care workers

Flu cases rising - early season start with increasing cases, especially among children and young adults

Transmission slowed during school half-term but expected to accelerate

Hospitalisations increasing while many remain unvaccinated

RSV activity increasing - pregnant women and older adults encouraged to get vaccinated



Vaccines help protect what matters most

STAY STRONG. GET VACCINATED.

Check your child's vaccines are up to date

Vaccines and porcine gelatine

- Gelatine is used as a stabiliser in a range of medicines, including some vaccines
- Highly purified and broken into very small molecules when used in vaccines

A concern for some faith groups:

- some note there is no issue taking a porcine or other animal derived ingredient in non-oral products
- other communities consider them to be forbidden.

- 2 vaccines that are as effective as the standard vaccines offered by NHS:

Contains porcine gelatine	Alternative without gelatine
MMR VaxPro x2	MMR Priorix® vaccine x2
Fluenz nasal spray	Flu injection – speak to GP/nurse

Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather



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Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather

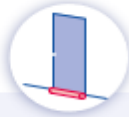
Plan ahead



Check the weather
forecast and the news



Make sure you have sufficient
food and medicine



Take simple measures to
reduce draughts at home

Keep yourself warm



Heat rooms you spend most
time in to 18°C if you can



Keep bedroom
windows closed



Wear multiple layers of
thinner clothing

Prepare your home



Check what financial support
may be available for you



Use energy saving tips to
save money on heating



Make sure appliances are
safe and working well

Look after yourself and others



If you're eligible, get
vaccinated against flu and
COVID-19



Check on others
who may be
vulnerable



Get help if needed.
Call NHS 111 or in an
emergency 999

For more information go to:

[Top tips for keeping warm and well this winter - www.GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

- Available in [English](#), [العربية](#), [বাংলা](#), [Español](#), [જાજિયન](#), [Italiano](#), [ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ](#), [Polski](#), [Português](#), [Română](#), [Українська](#), [اردو](#)
- [Easy Read](#)
- [British Sign Language \(BSL\) video](#)
- [Print version](#)
- [Poster](#)

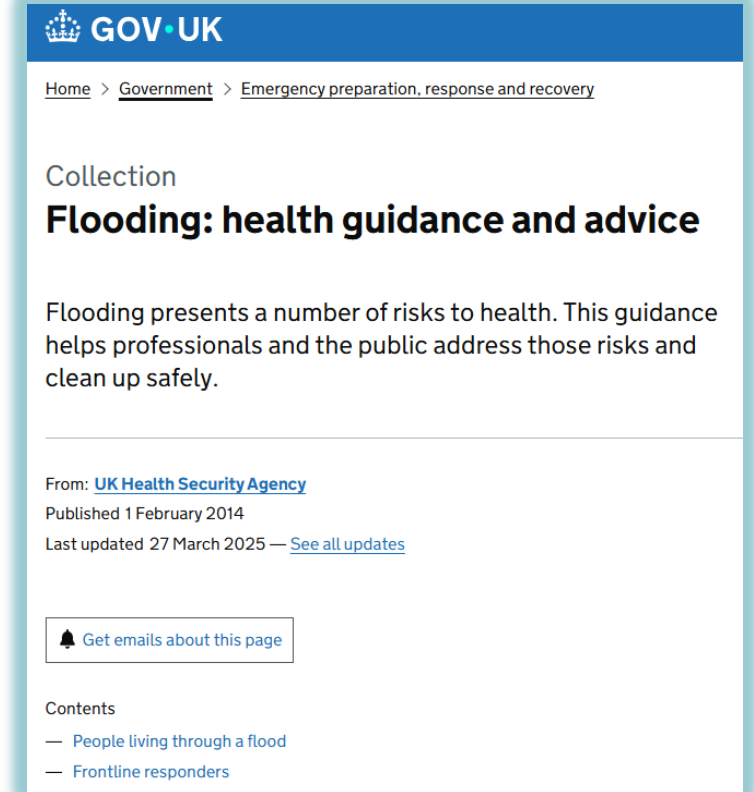
Guidance



Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP) 2025/26



Cold weather guidance collection



Flooding health guidance collection

Cold Health Alerts

The [Weather Health Alert system](#) is provided by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in partnership with the Met Office.

[Register to receive the alerts](#)



Action card for the voluntary and community sector



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Cold-Health Alert summary action card for the voluntary and community sector (VCS)

This is a summary of the suggested actions for each Cold-Health Alert level. Check the [Cold-Health Alert action card for the voluntary and community sector](#) for more detail, including the required actions for winter preparedness, and adapt actions to your service as appropriate.

Summary actions for Yellow Alert

- ☐ Confirm that relevant staff are aware of contingency plans, have received the Cold-Health Alert and know how to access relevant guidance and advice
- ☐ Use the Cold-Health Alert impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for, and response to, cold weather
- ☐ Activate Community Emergency Plans as required
- ☐ Share and emphasise the importance of [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather](#) messages to clients and staff
- ☐ Support the provision of information about health risks from reliable sources – especially to vulnerable groups and underserved populations
- ☐ Monitor temperatures in places where people who are at risk spend substantial time. Ensure staff know how to check and record these and to follow internal procedures
- ☐ Check that individuals at risk of cold-related illnesses have appropriate support arrangements in place

Summary actions for Amber Alert

- ☐ Continue Yellow Alert actions
- ☐ Work with providers and other partners to mobilise Community Emergency Plans
- ☐ Monitor at-risk individuals during cold-weather episodes, ensuring they have visitor or phone-call arrangements in place
- ☐ Ensure staff are undertaking appropriate home checks when visiting clients, for example room temperature, medications and food supplies
- ☐ Consider how local VCS organisations can provide resources (for example equipment, facilities and people), insight and advice and help share information

Summary actions for Red Alert

- ☐ Continue Amber Alert actions
- ☐ Follow all local emergency response plans
- ☐ Increase communication of key public health messages, especially to underserved populations and at-risk groups

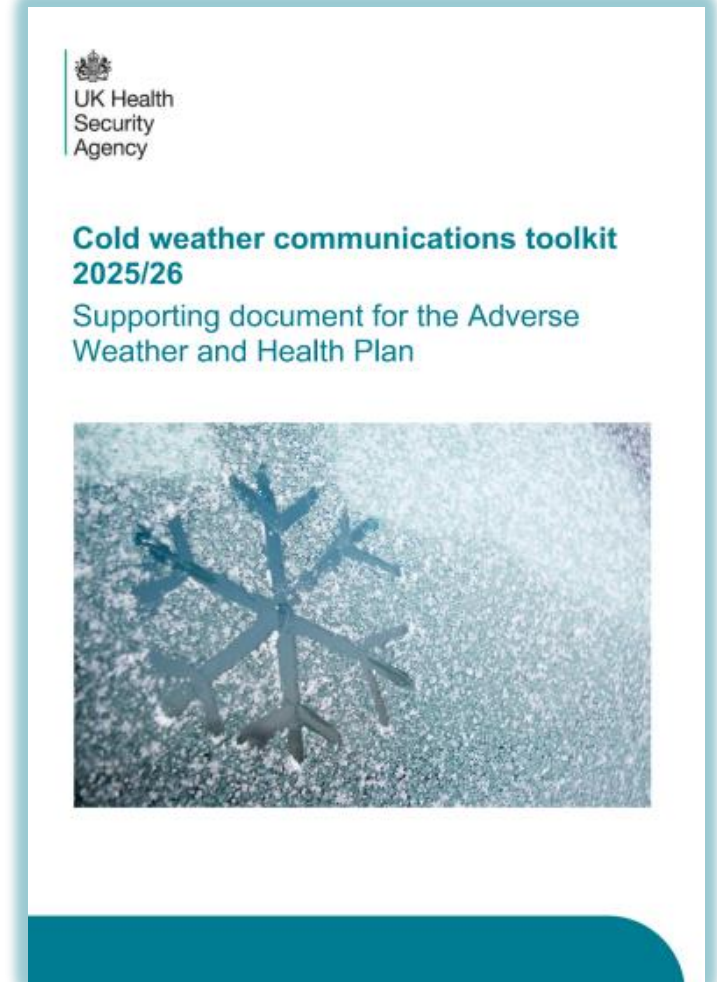
- The [action card](#) provides clear, practical guidance for VCS organisations to prepare for and respond to cold weather alerts
- It supports community resilience and helps protect vulnerable populations from cold-related health risks.

Cold weather communications toolkit 2025/26

Designed to **reduce the burden on communications teams** to develop and disseminate messaging that is consistent with UKHSA and the wider system, to reduce the chance of conflicting messaging and increase the speed at which the whole system can respond to a cold weather alert.

It contains:

- Background on the **AWHP** and **weather-health alerting system**
- Detail on the groups assessed to be **most at risk**
- **Specific advice** for various audiences, including the Adult Social Care sector, healthcare professionals, those working with rough sleepers and the homeless, and the education sector.
- **Examples of UKHSA messaging** so that stakeholders can ensure that their own messaging is consistent.
- **Social media posts and digital assets** that can be adapted for use on stakeholder channels, as well as suggested hashtags.
- Links to, and information about, **additional resources**.



[**Access the cold weather communications toolkit**](#)

Resources – for you and your network

General guidance

- Cold Weather and Health Guidance for the Public: [Keep warm and well](#) (Guidance, home checklist and poster)
- Also available in [বাংলা](#); [Español](#); [ગોજિયન](#); [Italiano](#); [ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ](#); [Polski](#); [Português](#); [Română](#); [Українська](#); [ودرا](#)

Setting-specific guidance

- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: healthcare professionals](#)
- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: for adult social care managers](#)
- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: people homeless and sleeping rough](#)
- [Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during cold weather: teachers and other educational professionals](#)

Cold-Health Alert [action cards](#)

- [Commissioner and local authorities](#)
- [Health and social care Providers](#)
- [Voluntary and community sector organisations](#)

Cold-Health Alert Warm spaces in England toolkit

- [Warm spaces in England: an evidence review and toolkit for local organisations](#)

Capacity building

- [E-module on cold homes and health for frontline practitioner - Helping People Living in Cold Homes](#)