

## Cold weather alert - Level 2 and 3 – Take Action

These levels outline the **need to take action** in response to cold weather in the West Midlands, which includes very low temperatures, wintry showers, icy conditions, overnight frosts and snow. **Level 2** refers to severe cold weather being forecast as very likely in the next 48 hours, and **Level 3** alerts are sent when the severe cold weather has arrived

Please do monitor weather forecast and cold weather alert pages for daily information and changes in alert levels throughout the winter season:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/>

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

Winter weather can be fun for some, but these weather conditions are also associated with an increase in illness and injuries. Cold weather increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, lung illnesses, flu and other diseases. People can slip and fall in the snow or ice, sometimes suffering serious injuries. Some groups, such as older people, very young children, and people with serious medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of cold weather.

Volunteers/frontline staff may come into contact with people from these groups or people who might not be able to cope as well as others if the weather turns bad, including people who may be on their own or without support

Some of the key things you can do to help as a volunteer/volunteer organisation/frontline member of staff include;

- Make sure that staff /volunteers have identified all those vulnerable to cold weather and that arrangements are in place to support and protect them appropriately
- If you are able to; check on older neighbours or relatives, especially those living alone or who have serious illnesses to make sure they are safe, warm and well

- If you come into contact with vulnerable individuals, checking they are well as often as possible. If you visit, checking that indoor temperatures remain at recommended levels (see below), that individuals take warm meals and drinks regularly and that they wear adequate warm clothing.
- Take account of weather-related road conditions when planning home visits.
- Ensure that you do not put yourself in danger; if you are concerned about someone but are not able to contact them yourself, consider if there are other more appropriate ways for them to be checked on, or seek medical help if you are particularly concerned about their welfare.
- Ensure that you are able to contact your colleagues and clients if visits need to be rearranged.
- If you represent an organisation, ensuring you have winter business continuity plans in place.

Some of the key messages you might pass on to those who you think might benefit include;

Encouraging those who are eligible to receive a flu vaccination – please see

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/flu](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/flu) and [www.coventry.gov.uk/flujab](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/flujab):

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## 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 2018)
- All **pregnant women** (including those women who become pregnant during the flu season)
- **Children (from 6 months) 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, motor neurone disease or learning disabilities
  - 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
- People who are morbidly obese
- Household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- **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 and 3 years old on August 31 2017 through their GP (i.e. those born between 1 September 2013 and 31 Aug 2015).
- All children in Reception and Years 1 - 4 will be offered a vaccination through school.

Looking after yourself or others;

- Food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy; aim to include five daily portions of fruit and vegetables. Tinned and frozen vegetables count toward your five a day
- 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 good 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

Encouraging people to keep their homes warm, efficiently and safely;

- Your home should be heated to at least 18°C (65°F) during the day and at night. Above this and you may waste money; below this you may risk your health. This will keep your home warm and may lower your bills
- 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
- Switch your appliances (such as TVs and microwaves) off rather than leaving them on standby
- Do not use a gas cooker or oven to heat your home; it is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and this 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

Keeping the warmth in;

- Ensuring radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains
- Drawing curtains at dusk to help keep heat generated inside your rooms

Please also see Stay Well in Winter advice at:  
<http://www.nhs.uk/staywell/>

**These simple messages can be life-saving**

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), please contact:

**Coventry** - The Affordable Warmth Team on 024 7683 2330

**Warwickshire** - The Act on Energy helpline 0800 988 2881