



Cold weather Plan

Policy and Procedure

Notice to employees using a paper copy of this policy
The company Policies folder on the shared drive holds the most recent version of this document and all employees must ensure that they are using the most recent guidance.

Document Control

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Introduction

Libertatem Healthcare Group recognises it owes a duty of care to protect its clients against the effects of cold weather both inside and outside of their home. Its aim is to use reasonable endeavours to ensure the wellbeing of the clients during spells of cold weather. NHS England produces a cold weather plan each year as it recognises that there are many avoidable deaths each winter in England primarily due to heart and lung conditions from cold temperatures rather than hypothermia. The winter period not only sees a significant rise in deaths but also a substantial increase in illnesses.

This policy can be read alongside the Adverse Weather Policy and procedure.

The impact of cold weather

The impact of cold weather on health is predictable and mostly preventable.

Direct effects of winter weather include an increase in incidence of:

- **heart attack**
- **stroke**
- **respiratory disease**
- **influenza**
- **falls and injuries**
- **hypothermia**

Indirect effects of cold weather include

- **mental health illnesses such as depression**
- **carbon monoxide poisoning from poorly maintained or poorly ventilated boilers cooking and heating appliances and heating.**

Clients at Risk

1. older people (in particular those over 75 years old, otherwise frail, and or socially isolated)
2. people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke or TIA, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or diabetes
3. people with mental ill-health that reduces individual's ability to self-care (including dementia)
4. pregnant women (in view of potential impact of cold on foetus)
5. children under the age of 5
6. people with learning difficulties
7. people assessed as being at risk of, or having had, recurrent falls
8. people who are housebound or otherwise low mobility
9. people living in deprived circumstances
10. people living in houses with mould
11. people who are fuel poor

Action Plan for keeping well in winter (as advised in cold winter plan 2019)

Flu Vaccination

Support workers should liaise with the client and the GP to ensure that the client receives a flu vaccination. Free flu vaccinations are available for those who are at risk.

Keeping warm

- Heating the home to at least 18°C in winter poses minimal risk to health when you are wearing suitable clothing
- Support the client to ensure the heating system and cooking appliances are checked regularly and keep the home well ventilated
- use an electric blanket if detailed in support plan (this is not appropriate for all clients due to neurological and sensory damage)
- do not allow client to use a gas cooker or oven to heat their home; it is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and this can kill
- make sure client has a well-stocked supply of heating oil or LPG or solid fuel if they are not on mains gas or electricity – to make sure they do not run out in winter
- draw the curtains at dusk to help keep heat generated inside the rooms
- make sure radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains

Food to keep warm

Support the client to look after themselves during periods of cold weather by:

- Ensuring provision of regular hot meals and fluids as food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep the body warm
- Aim to include 5 daily portions of fruit and vegetables. Tinned and frozen vegetables count toward 5 a day
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy

Keeping active and well

- Exercise is good for individuals all year round and it can help keep people warm in winter
- Where possible, try to encourage client to move around at least once an hour.
- 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 the client has spare medication in case they are unable to go out
- Review if client should be included on the priority services register operated by water and power suppliers

Recommended temperatures for homes (from NHS England Cold Weather Plan 2019)

The recommended indoor temperatures for homes in winter is at least 18°C (65F). Winter poses minimal risk to the health of a sedentary person, wearing suitable clothing.

Daytime recommendations

- the 18°C (65F) threshold is particularly important for people 65 years and over or with pre-existing medical conditions; having temperatures slightly above this threshold may be beneficial for health

- the 18°C (65F) threshold also applies to healthy people (1 to 64 years); if they are wearing appropriate clothing and are active, they may wish to heat their homes to slightly less than 18°C (65F)

Overnight recommendations:

- maintaining the 18°C (65F) threshold overnight may be beneficial to protect the health of those 65 years and over or with pre-existing medical conditions; they should continue to use sufficient bedding, clothing and thermal blankets, or heating aids as appropriate
- overnight, the 18°C (65F) threshold may be less important for healthy people (1 to 64) if they have sufficient bedding, clothing and use thermal blankets or heating aids as appropriate

Seeking Advice

If you have concerns that a client you are supporting is suffering and becoming unwell due to the effects from the cold or pre-existing conditions seem to be worsening, please do call the clinical team for advice and support on 0118 9730006 or call the clients GP or 111.

If the client becomes acutely unwell and you need immediate assistance and support please dial 999 and request the ambulance service.

Document very clearly in the daily record any advice sought, and make note of who has provided the advice and the actions that you have been asked to undertake and the effectiveness of the actions.

Useful Links

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840604/Keep_warm_keep_well_leaflet_update_2019.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465111/Top_tips_to_keep_warm_keep_well.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748492/the_cold_weather_plan_for_england_2018.pdf