

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
INTEGRATED COLD WEATHER
PLAN
2017/2018

Halton Borough Council Integrated Cold Weather Plan

Introduction

Although winter weather and snow can be fun, they are also associated with an increase in illnesses and injuries. Cold weather increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, lung illnesses, flu and other diseases. People slip and fall in the snow or ice, suffering serious injuries. Some groups, such as older people, very young children and people with pre-existing medical conditions, are particularly susceptible to the effects of very cold weather.

The *Cold Weather Plan for England 2015*¹ is a public health plan that aims to prepare for, alert people to, and prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of severe cold in England.

The Cold Weather Plan for England remains largely the same as recent editions. The following changes have been made to the content:

- confirmation that the majority of the burden of cold-related ill-health occurs at moderate outdoor winter temperatures (from 4-8°C depending on region). These findings require an increased emphasis on year-round (level 0) and winter preparedness and action (level 1) to protect 'at-risk' population groups.
- the inclusion of pregnant women as a 'vulnerable' group.
- reference to the Department for Energy and Climate Change's new strategy - Cutting the cost of keeping warm: A fuel poverty strategy for England which emphasises the role the health and social care sector can play in tackling fuel poverty
- updated advice on flu vaccination
- publication of a new leaflet entitled 'Top Tips for Keeping Warm and Well', in collaboration with Age UK. The leaflet is targeted at pensioners in receipt of pension credit in England, Scotland and Wales. It will sit alongside an updated Keep Warm Keep Well booklet.

The Halton Borough Council Cold Weather Plan 2017/18 links with severe weather plans within Halton CCG and key provider organisations. It aims to capture the work that is undertaken by Halton Borough Council with regard to prevention and awareness activity for Cold Weather. It details the cascade arrangements for the cold weather alerts that are received from the met office as part of the Cold Weather Plan for England and details the actions that will be carried out by the council as each of these levels are triggered.

¹ The national Cold Weather Plan can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cold-weather-plan-for-england

Through its Cold Weather work Halton Borough Council aims to help reduce the significant increase in winter deaths and illness that is observed each year owing to cold weather, which in turn, could help to reduce pressures on the health and social care system in the busiest months of the year. The Highways Winter Service Plan also supplements this work.

Cold Weather Alerts

Underpinning the Cold Weather Plan is the Cold Weather Alert service run by the Met Office. The Cold Weather Alert service includes five alert levels.

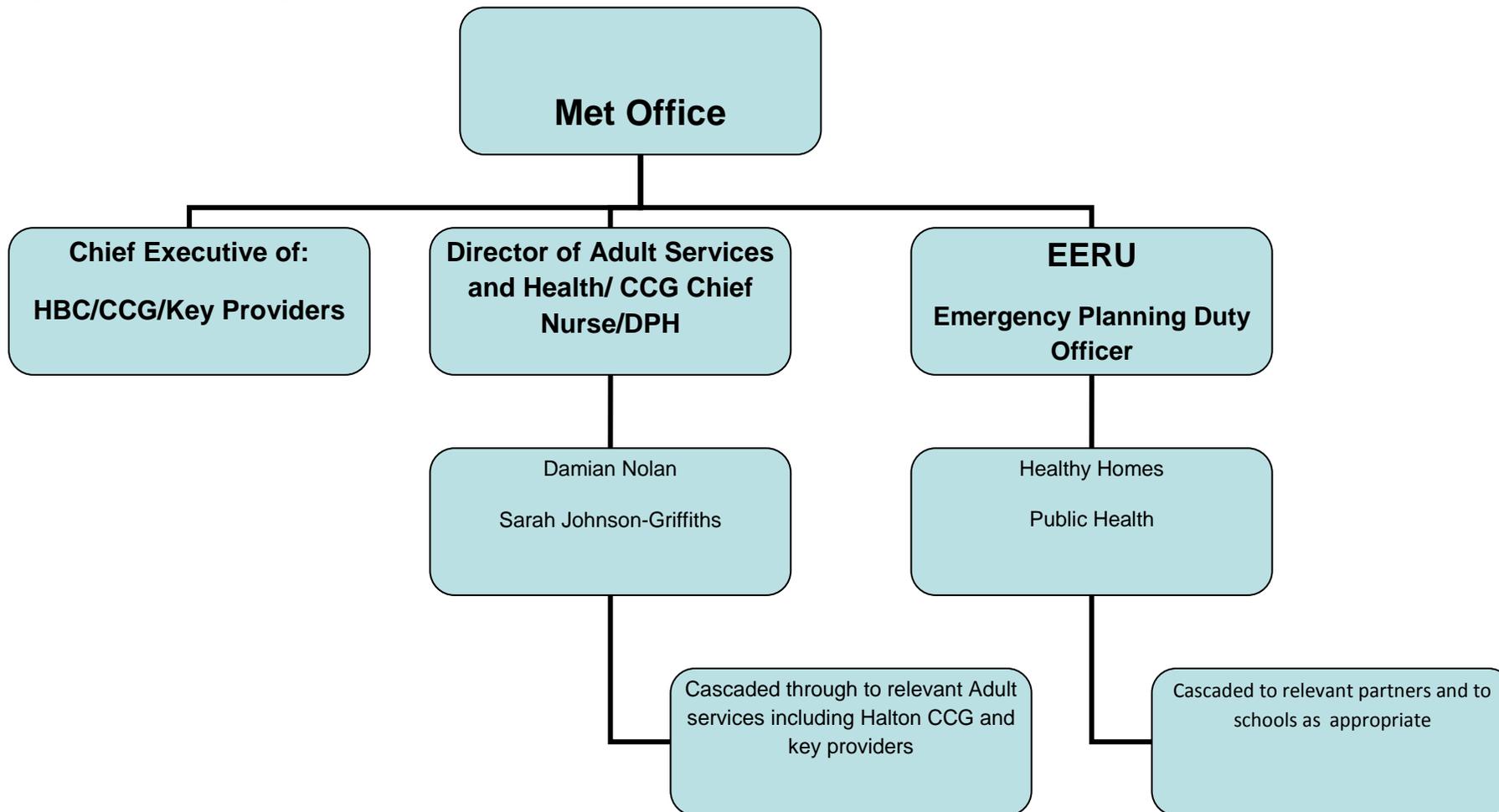
Cold Weather Alerts are issued by the Met Office on the basis of either of two measures: low temperatures; or widespread ice and/or heavy snow. Often low temperature criteria are met at the same time as the ice and snow. However, sometimes one may occur without the other.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Detailed Description</u>	<u>Summary</u>
Level 0	This emphasises that to build resilience for the coming winter requires long lead-in planning times. This level of alert is aiming to emphasise the need to prepare for, adapt to and mitigate climate change and develop long-term sustainable approaches which seek to ensure behaviour change across the general population, community and health care professionals. Level 0 denotes that these are actions that should be taken throughout the year, and certainly before Level 1 starts for winter preparedness at the start of winter.	All Year
Level 1	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.	Winter Preparedness and Action 1 November – 31 st March
Level 2	This is declared when the Met Office forecasts a 60% risk of severe winter weather in one or more defined geographical areas in the days that follow. This usually occurs two to three days ahead of the event. A Level 2 alert would be issued when a mean temperature of 2°C is predicted for at least 48 hours, with 60% confidence, and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are forecast, with the same confidence.	Severe Winter Weather is forecast – Alert and Readiness Mean Temperatures of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are predicted within 48hrs, with

		60% confidence
Level 3	This is issued when the weather described in Level 2 actually happens. It indicates that severe winter weather is now occurring, and is expected to impact on people's health and on health services.	<p>Response to severe winter weather –Severe weather action</p> <p>Severe winter weather is now occurring: mean temperature of 2°C or less and/or widespread ice and heavy snow</p>
Level 4	This is reached when a period of cold weather is so severe and/or prolonged that its effects extend outside health and social care, and may include, for example, transport or power or water shortages; and/or where the integrity of health and social care systems is threatened. At this level, illness and death may occur among the fit and healthy, not just in high-risk groups, and will require a multi-sector response at national and regional levels. The decision to go to a Level 4 is made at national level and will be taken in light of a cross-Government assessment of the weather conditions, coordinated by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (Cabinet Office). A Level 4 alert is a judgement made in light of this cross-Government assessment and, depending on the severity of the conditions and impact, could be declared over any time period.	<p>Major Incident – Emergency Response</p> <p>Central Government will declare a level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged cold weather affecting sectors other than health</p>

It is important than on receipt of the Cold Weather alerts from the Met Office that these are circulated to managers of relevant services and frontline officers, who can take action to ensure that cold weather health impacts are minimised. Figure 1 overleaf shows how the Cold Weather Alerts from the Met Office are cascaded within Halton Borough Council and to Halton Borough Council service providers.

Figure 1 : Halton Borough Council Cascade



Halton Borough Council Actions

On receipt of the Cold Weather alerts Halton Borough Council will undertake the following actions (please also refer to Appendix A – National Action Card)

Level 0 – Long Term Planning all year

- Participate in NHS exercises related to cold weather and the Local Health Resilience Partnership.
- Ensure HBC cold weather plan arrangements are fit for purpose and fit with wider winter resilience planning.
- Fuel Poverty surgeries held in various locations across the borough including health centres, GP Surgeries and luncheon clubs. Relevant face to face Information and advice provided
- Ensure HBC can identify those most vulnerable to cold weather and draw up plans for joined- up support with partner agencies.
- Through the Benefits Maximisation Service assist residents in ensuring they are claiming benefits to which they are entitled.
- Review gritting routes and publish on internet
- Internally Business Continuity with regard to Cold weather is considered by plan holders and relevant areas have relevant resources such as grit in place.
- Winter Preparedness Seminar held for internal departments and partner agencies to raise awareness of cold weather actions and capabilities.
- Winter Survival Campaign planning – Stakeholder/officer group.
- Housing Strategy Energy Efficiency Officer works with a wide range of partners to take referrals and offers energy/fuel poverty advice
- Work on-going to reduce in-house emissions and contractual arrangements promote reduction in emissions.
- Ensure adaptation and mitigation measures for the impact of climate change are in place.
- Resilient Halton Business Network promotes cold weather planning to wider businesses.
- Review Highways Winter Service Plan
- Communicate public health media messages.

Level 1 – Winter Preparedness programme 1st November – 31st March

- Cold Weather Plan Alert cascaded as appropriate with information on alert levels and cold weather plan information.
- Ensure Cold Weather Alert Cascade and ensure the correct individuals are receiving the alerts.
- Flu vaccinations programme in place for relevant frontline staff, with a communications campaign to encourage staff to be vaccinated.
- Ensure influenza and pneumococcal vaccination plans are in place for over 65's and all at risk groups in tandem with PHE and the CCG.
- All service areas to review Business Continuity Plans to ensure fit for purpose for severe weather.
- Winter Survival Campaign launched.
- Promotion of community resilience messages particularly for vulnerable groups – *Look After Your Elderly Neighbour* etc.

Adults Services specific actions:

- Relevant areas of 'Adults Services and Health' and 'Children and Young People's Services' to ensure plans are in place to deal with winter surge in demand for services.
- Relevant areas of 'Adults Services and Health' and 'Children and Young People's Services' to identify all those individuals vulnerable to cold weather and ensure arrangements are in place to support and protect them appropriately.
- Adult Services and Health to review and update surge capacity / escalation planning arrangements.
- Ensure key partners, including all managers of care, residential and nursing homes are aware of the alert system and can access advice.
- Names of individuals at risk identified.
- Key workers to put together a plan stating the prevention and management arrangements that include all agencies involved.
- Co-ordinated plans, paying particular attention to frail elderly living alone.
- Ensure staff are aware of the cold weather plan guidance on minimising and coping with cold weather related health risks.
- Ensure all community staff who identify clients that are too cold know how to get assistance for their clients and are aware of the Halton projects being delivered through the Warm Homes Healthy People funding and how to access these where appropriate.

Level 2 – Severe Winter Weather is Forecast – Alert and readiness

Mean temperature of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are predicted within 48hrs, with 60% confidence.

- Ensure alerts are cascaded to relevant council staff and provider services.
- Ensure vulnerable clients are identified and being supported.
- Ensure all key staff are aware of HBC winter plans and have access to relevant advice.
- Ensure management of capacity issues and reablement and step-down care.
- Implement emergency/business continuity plans where required.
- Communicate public media weather messages.
- Grit network and use MNS messaging where appropriate.
- Communicate public health messages.

Adults Services and Health:

- Ensure alerts are cascaded to relevant council staff and provider services.
- Ensure staff are undertaking appropriate home checks when visiting clients (e.g. room temperature, medications, food supplies etc.)
- Arrange for BMS team checks with clients where appropriate.
- Ensure alerts are cascaded to relevant council staff and provider services.
- Ensure vulnerable clients are identified and being supported.
- Activate plans to deal with a surge in demand for services. Discuss with managers available capacity of beds. Liaise with relevant agencies who may require use of beds.
- Ensure staff are aware of cold weather health risks and how service users can protect themselves. .

- Consider carers' need and the support they can continue to give. Advise carers to contact GP's if concerned about an individual's health. Carers to record concerns and action taken.
- Ensure all care home managers and domiciliary providers have access to Department of Health advice. Advice to be forwarded to all managers and hard copies kept in office. All managers to be informed where they can access advice.

Level 3 – Response to severe winter weather – Severe Weather Action

Severe winter weather is now occurring: mean temperature 2°C or less and/or widespread ice and heavy snow.

- Continue all level 2 actions.
- School closures reported to media and staff via usual procedures.

Adult Services and Health

- Ensure strategic co-ordination of the likely surge in demand for primary and secondary care, and enquiries to social services.
- Ensure that staff are aware of cold weather health risks and are able to advise clients how to protect against them.
- Consider daily visits/phone calls for high-risk individuals living on their own who have no regular daily contacts.
- Advise carers to contact the patient's GP if there are concerns about an individual's health.
- Ensure that all care home managers and domiciliary care providers have access to Department of Health advice.
- Ensure carers are receiving appropriate advice and support.
- Ensure Continuity arrangements are working with provider organisations.

Hospitals and care, residential and nursing homes

- Ensure that rooms, particularly living rooms and bedrooms, are kept warm.
- Ensure that patients and residents wear warm clothing that is appropriate to the temperature and weather conditions, indoors and outdoors.
- Identify particularly high-risk individuals.
- Ensure that patients and residents take warm drinks and food regularly.
- Ensure that staffing levels will be sufficient to cover the anticipated period of extreme weather.
- Repeat messages on risk and protective measures to staff.

Level 4 – Major Incident – Emergency Response

Central Government will declare at level 4 Alert in the event of severe or prolonged cold weather affecting sectors other than health

- All level 3 responsibilities must be maintained during Level 4 response.
- Link into national emergency response arrangements by central government as appropriate.

Appendix A. National PH England Action Card for Commissioners (health and social care) and local authorities 2015/16

Level 0 – All Year Round Planning

- work with partner agencies to ensure that cold weather planning features within wider winter resilience planning
- work with partners to ensure that a strategic approach to the reduction of excess winter deaths (EWDs) and fuel poverty is taken across the local health and social care economy
- work with partner agencies to:
 - develop a shared understanding of EWDs and what partners can do to reduce them
 - identify those most at risk from seasonal variations
 - improve winter resilience of those at risk
 - ensure a local, joined-up programme is in place to support improved housing, heating and insulation, including uptake of energy-efficient, low-carbon solutions
 - achieve a reduction in carbon emissions and assess the implications of climate change
- consider how your winter plans can help to reduce health inequalities, how they might target high-risk groups and address the wider determinants of health
- ensure that organisations and staff are prompted to signpost vulnerable clients onwards (eg for energy efficiency measures, benefits or related advice)
- work with partners and staff on risk reduction awareness (eg flu vaccination for staff in September/October), information and education
- engage with local VCS organisations for planning and implementation of all stages of the plan

Level 1: Winter preparedness and action programme – 1 November to 31 March

- communicate public health media messages
- work with partner agencies to coordinate locally appropriate cold weather plans
- ensure key partners, including all managers of care, residential and nursing homes are aware of the alert system and can access advice
- review the distribution of the cold weather alerts across the system and ensure staff are aware of winter plans and advice
- ensure that local organisations and professionals are taking appropriate actions in light of the cold weather alerts in accordance with the local and national Cold Weather Plan
- ensure that organisations and staff are prompted to signpost vulnerable clients onwards (eg for energy efficiency measures, benefits or related advice)
- liaise with providers of emergency shelter for homeless people to agree plans for severe weather and ensure capacity to scale up provision
- support communities to help those at risk. Support the development of community emergency plans
- identify which local health, social care and voluntary and community sector organisations are most vulnerable to the effects of winter weather. Agree plans for winter surge in demand for services. Make sure emergency contacts are up to date

Level 2: Severe winter weather is forecast - Alert and readiness

Mean temperature of 2°C and/or widespread ice and heavy snow are predicted within 48 hours, with 60% confidence

- continue to communicate public health media messages
- communicate alerts to staff and make sure that they can take appropriate actions
- ensure key partners, including all managers of care, residential and nursing homes, are aware of the alerts and can access Department of Health and other advice
- ensure that organisations and staff are prompted to signpost vulnerable clients onwards (eg for energy efficiency measures, benefits or related advice)
- support local community organisations to activate community emergency plans
- activate business continuity arrangements and emergency plans as required
- consider how to make best use of available capacity, for example by using community beds for at-risk patients who do not need an acute bed and enabling access to step-down care and reablement
- work with partner agencies (eg transport) to ensure road/ pavement gritting preparations are in place to allow access to critical services and pedestrian hotspots

Level 3: Response to severe winter weather – Severe weather action

Severe winter weather is now occurring: mean temperature of 2°C or less and/or widespread ice and heavy snow

- continue to communicate public health media messages
- communicate alerts to staff and make sure that winter plans are in operation
- ensure key partners are undertaking action in response to alerts
- support local community organisations to mobilise community emergency plans
- ensure continuity arrangements are working with provider organisations
- work with partner agencies (eg transport) to ensure road and pavement gritting arrangements are in effect to allow access to critical services and pedestrian hotspots

Level 4: Major incident - Emergency response

Central government will declare a level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged cold weather affecting sectors other than health

- continue actions as per level 3 unless advised to the contrary
- implementation of national emergency response arrangements by central government