

Winter Preparedness Resource Pack

A resource pack for Adult
Social Care Providers

June 2026
Version:1

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Introduction

This pack provides essential guidance for care homes to prepare for the winter season and help prevent cases and outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Residents and staff in long-stay residential care settings are particularly vulnerable to infections that become more prevalent during winter, such as seasonal influenza (flu) and gastrointestinal illnesses like norovirus (commonly known as the "winter vomiting bug"). These infections are highly contagious and can spread rapidly in communal environments.

Breakdowns in infection prevention and control protocols have been identified as contributing factors in some outbreaks. It is therefore vital that care staff remain vigilant and follow recommended procedures to minimise transmission risks.

Older adults and individuals with chronic health conditions are especially at risk of developing serious complications from infections such as Influenza, Covid-19 and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). Fortunately, many of these illnesses can be prevented through vaccination. Ensuring eligible residents are offered and supported to receive vaccinations not only protects their health but also reduces the likelihood of outbreaks within the care home.

Key Messages for Care Home Managers

1. Be Prepared

Managing Outbreaks can be an incredibly stressful time; however, taking a few simple steps prior to the winter period can help minimise this.

Please use the information in this pack to help you prepare.

2. Recognise Outbreaks

Seasonal flu outbreak definition
Two or more cases of flu-like illness* within 48 hours occur in residents and/or staff in close proximity to each other.

***A flu-like illness is defined as:**

(i) a temperature of 37.8°C or more AND at least one respiratory symptom (cough, hoarseness, nasal discharge, nasal congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing, sneezing)

OR

(ii) an acute deterioration in physical or mental ability without any other known cause. Sometimes older patients may not develop fever from flu and so respiratory symptoms alone can be identified as a sign of a possible flu outbreak to be reported.

3. Reporting Outbreaks

Report outbreaks to your local health protection team.

Monday – Friday 08:00am – 17:00pm
Lincolnshire County Council
Health Protection Team
healthprotectionteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
01522 557 993

Weekdays after 17:00pm and weekends:
UK Health Security Agency
empht@ukhsa.gov.uk
0344 2254 524 (option 1)

4. Vaccinations

We all recognise the serious impact flu can have, particularly on those who are most vulnerable. That's why receiving the seasonal flu vaccine is a vital preventative measure, not only for your own health, but also to help protect those in your care, such as residents in long-term care facilities.

Each year, the flu vaccine is made available to frontline workers in social care settings. If you do not have access to an employer-led occupational health scheme, you are entitled to receive the vaccine free of charge through the NHS.

As details of the annual flu vaccination programme are released, the Health Protection Team will contact you with information on how to access the vaccine. We kindly ask all care home managers to ensure this information is shared with their staff in a timely manner.

Commented [VP1]: @DavidR Clark let me know if you are happy with the added section?

Commented [DC2R1]: Looks great, thank you

Cold Health Alerts

The **Cold Weather Plan for England**, developed by the UK Health Security Agency, aims to reduce the health impacts of cold weather, particularly for vulnerable populations such as older adults in care homes.

Why It Matters?

Cold weather can significantly increase the risk of:

- Respiratory illnesses (e.g. flu, pneumonia)

- Cardiovascular events (e.g. heart attacks, strokes)
- Hypothermia and falls
- Excess winter deaths, especially among the elderly and those with chronic conditions

Key Actions for Care Homes

1. Year-Round Planning

- Ensure heating systems are maintained and working efficiently.
- Identify residents at higher risk from cold weather.
- Train staff on cold weather health risks and response protocols.

2. Winter Preparedness

- Monitor weather alerts and prepare for cold spells.
- Stock up on essentials (blankets, medications, food).
- Encourage flu and COVID-19 vaccinations for residents and staff.

3. Cold Weather Alerts

Respond to Met Office alerts with appropriate measures:

- Keep indoor temperatures at least 18°C.
- Ensure residents are dressed warmly and stay hydrated.
- Increase checks on vulnerable residents.

4. Communication

- Share cold weather advice with staff, residents, and families.
- Display posters and reminders about [Keeping warm and well: Staying safe in cold weather](#)

5. Support and Resources

- Use available guidance and action cards (*See **Printable resources, useful links and guidance section in this pack***)

Care Home Planning Checklist for Respiratory Illnesses

Date Completed:	Completed by:	
Actions to prepare for seasonal cases of ARI	Yes	No
1. Do you have residents over 65?		
2. Do you have any residents in a clinical risk group (including those with chronic respiratory, cardiac, kidney, liver, neurological disease, diabetes, obese BMI > 40, Underweight < 40kg or BMI <18.5		
3. If yes to the above, ensure that the care home has an up-to-date record of all residents' weights and conditions. If Tamiflu is prescribed during an influenza outbreak, considerations will need to be given regarding dosages, based on accurate information. Do you have an up-to-date record of all residents' weights, chronic illnesses, and any allergies?		
4. Do you keep up to date records of all residents who have been vaccinated for Influenza, COVID-19 and Respiratory Syncytial Virus, and any other seasonal vaccines?		
5. Remind staff of the importance of having the seasonal flu vaccine and any other vaccines they may be eligible for. This should include agency staff. Care home managers should also be aware of any vulnerable staff who may be at risk of severe illness if they contract flu, including staff with long term conditions or pregnant staff. More information regarding health conditions which mean you are eligible for the flu vaccine can be found here .		
Respiratory hygiene and infection control precautions		
6. Are your infection control policies up to date?		
7. Are staff up to date with their Infection Prevention and Control Training?		
8. Are you compliant with hand hygiene audit assessments?		
9. Do you have adequate quantities of Personal Protective Equipment in the event of an outbreak of a respiratory illness e.g., disposable gloves, aprons, and surgical face masks? Are your stocks in date?		

10. For residents who are eligible for COVID-19 testing, do you have enough stock of lateral flow tests?		
For more information regarding symptoms and testing for Acute Respiratory Infections including COVID-19, please refer to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) in Adult Social Care: Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI)		
11. Do you have appropriate linen management systems in place as well as clinical waste disposal systems, including foot operated bins?		
12. Do you have access to hand washing facilities, liquid soap, and disposable paper towels?		
Are your stock levels adequately maintained?		
If possible and safe to do so, use alcoholic gel in places where hand washing facilities are not available (e.g., entrances/exits, residents' lounge, dining room), and maintain adequate supplies in view of increased use.		
Visiting should be supported safely even during an outbreak. Remind visitors of the importance of washing hands when entering the premises and advise them to follow outbreak precautions including the use of PPE.		
Remind visitors to stay away from the setting if they have symptoms of a respiratory illness.		
It is important to ensure staff, visitors, and residents have access to appropriate hand washing facilities.		
13. Do you have adequate levels of cleaning materials in anticipation of increased cleaning?		
14. Do you have signs for visitors to display at entrances to notify them of an outbreak? If no, please see Outbreak Management Resource Pack for printable materials.		
Actions to take if you suspect an outbreak		
15. Have you contacted the residents' GP for a clinical assessment?		

If out of hours, have you contacted the CAS for Care Homes service?		
16. If yes, have you taken the residents observations using WHZAN and communicated these to the GP or other clinician if contacting CAS?		
17. Have you completed the Acute Respiratory Infection Action Card in the Outbreak Management Resource Pack?		
18. Have you contacted the Health Protection Team if you suspect an outbreak?		
Early recognition of an influenza or respiratory illness outbreak amongst staff and/or residents is vital (two or more linked cases in 48 hours, linked by time and place). Outbreaks of influenza/respiratory illness should be reported promptly to the local health protection team. The health protection team will undertake a risk assessment and provide further advice (e.g., infection control guidance, whether nose/throat swabs are required and advice on those requiring antiviral treatment or prophylaxis) Maintaining high standards of record keeping will help with investigations of any outbreaks of acute respiratory illness (i.e. list of staff and resident cases incl. dates of birth, GP details, symptoms, date of onset of symptoms of the first and most recent cases, location of cases, total number of residents in the care home and the flu and covid vaccination status of cases).		
Contact Details		
In hours Monday – Friday 08:00am – 17:00pm Lincolnshire County Council Health Protection Team healthprotectionteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk 01522 557 993	Out of Hours Weekdays after 17:00pm and weekends: UK Health Security Agency empht@ukhsa.gov.uk 0344 2254 524 (option 1)	

Printable Resources

Cold Health Summary Action Card: Care Homes and other Adult Social Care Residential Settings



UK Health
Security
Agency

Cold-Health Alert summary action card for providers: care homes and other adult social care residential settings

This is a summary of the suggested actions for each Cold-Health Alert level. Check the [Cold-Health Alert action card for providers](#) 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 staff are aware of contingency plans and received the Cold-Health Alert
- ☐ Use the Cold-Health Alert impact matrix to inform the local risk assessment for, and response to, cold weather
- ☐ Activate Business Continuity Plans and emergency plans as required
- ☐ Monitor temperatures inside buildings, especially where people spend most time, and aim to keep to 18°C (for example by keeping windows and doors closed to reduce draughts)
- ☐ Prioritise maintenance of heating systems to keep rooms being used warm
- ☐ Ensure that clients have access to other ways of keeping warm (for example blankets, warm drinks) as needed
- ☐ Activate road or pavement gritting to allow access to critical services and pedestrian hotspots, if ice or snow occur

Summary actions for Amber Alert

- ☐ Continue Yellow Alert Actions
- ☐ Support staff to determine how and where to prioritise travel, especially if ice and/or snow occur

Summary actions for Red Alert

- ☐ Continue Amber Alert Actions
- ☐ Follow all local emergency response plans and feed into local (and, where appropriate, national) coordination and response



Poster - Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather



UK Health
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Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather

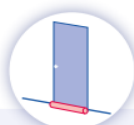
Plan ahead



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

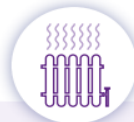


Wear multiple layers of
thinner clothing

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)

Useful Links

Easy Read Booklet: [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather](#)

Print Version: [Top tips for keeping warm and well this winter](#)

Weather Health Alerts: [UKHSA Data Dashboard](#)

NHS: [Winter vaccinations and winter health](#)

Health Protection Team: [Outbreak Management Resource Pack](#)

Guidance

- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during cold weather: for adult social care managers](#)
- [Adverse Weather and Health Plan: Protecting health from weather related harm 2025 - 2026](#)