

A Very Brief Advice Intervention

Coping with and staying safe in cold weather

Whilst climate change is generally causing milder winters in the UK, there are still significant cold spells with [numerous alerts](#) issued across the UK last winter. The ONS calculated that 13400 more deaths occurred in the 2021-22 winter period, compared to the non-winter period.

Everyone is at risk to the effects of cold weather, but some people are at higher risk. Cold weather increases the risk of heart attacks, pneumonia, strokes, hypothermia, and many other conditions. It also increases the risk of accidents, especially for the elderly, as well as the consequences of storms and heavy rain or snowfall. You can see more about how to stay safe in winter [here](#).

People who are at higher risk during the cold weather include:

- Older people (aged 65 and over)
- People with cardiovascular conditions
- People with respiratory conditions (in particular, COPD and childhood asthma)
- People with mental health conditions
- People with learning and/or physical disabilities
- Young children (particularly those aged under 5)
- Pregnant women
- People on a low income
- People who are sleeping rough

You should check in with anyone you think might be at risk to see if they need advice or help. Many of the harms linked to cold exposure can be mitigated if a few simple actions are taken to protect yourself and others.

This very brief advice intervention below is designed to guide you through a conversation with somebody who is concerned about staying safe & coping in the cold weather or somebody who is more vulnerable to the negative health effects of the cold and should be aware of the impact this may have on their health, and how to reduce harms.

Whilst the weather will be generally cold over the winter period, the UK Health Security Agency and Met Office monitor forecasts and issue Cold Weather Alerts for particularly cold spells. During these alerts, it is important to check on vulnerable residents and implement any Severe Weather Emergency Protocols. Please sign up for alerts here: [Weather-Health Alerting System - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/weather-health-alerting-system).

Highlights

National support: [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/keeping-warm-and-well)

Local support for winter: [Helping you stay warm and well | Haringey Council](#)

Local support for cost of living: [Haringey, Here to Help](#)

The Very Brief Intervention below is designed to guide you through a conversation with somebody who is concerned about the effects of cold weather and winter and the impact this may be having upon their health and the health of their household.

Very Brief Advice Intervention



Do you know how to check the forecast/what the thresholds are for cold weather alerts?

If not, suggest they check the local news or local weather forecast or click here to show the person the met office website. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Do you know what you can do to keep warm and safe in cold weather?

Discuss ways that individuals can keep warm and safe in cold weather, and what health issues/illnesses to look out for (see below).

Click here to show the person the UK Health Security Agency's 'Keeping warm and well' advice and the Met Office's Weather Ready advice.

- [Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [WeatherReady - Met Office](#)

Click here to show the local support for winter page

- [Helping you stay warm and well | Haringey Council](#)

In Haringey we run a warm welcome programme to provide safe, non-stigmatising spaces for residents to come together for different activities across various sites. Residents can get warm, recharge their devices, and be connected to help.



Please access information about this here:

[Haringey Warm Welcome | Haringey Council](#)

GLA spaces are linked here:

[Warm Welcome Campaign](#)

How to prepare and keep yourself warm

You should heat your home to a temperature that is comfortable for you. Low indoor temperatures can have a serious impact on your health, especially if you have medical conditions or are older.

Simple changes can help to keep you and your home warm. These include:

- Try to heat rooms you spend a lot of time in, such as the living room or bedroom, to at least 18°C
- Try to reduce draughts; you can fit draft excluders around doors cheaply
- Keep your bedroom windows closed at night
- Wear several layers of thinner clothing; this could keep you warmer than one thicker layer

Are you struggling to afford to keep your home warm?

If yes, discuss ways that individuals can keep their home warm (see below). If the individual still has concerns about an uncomfortable cold house that's affecting the person's health or someone else's, get medical advice. **They can also get help from their local authority- go to the Assist section in this document.** The below are national support documents.

How to keep your home warm

Seek financial support

- [Make your home more efficient](#)
- [Improve your heating](#)
- [Get help with cost of living](#)

It is also important to try to follow [energy saving tips](#).

Are you struggling to put food on the table?

There is support available if you are struggling with the cost of food. Be sure to use the help for cost of living (local and national) to help with this.

You can see some generic advice here: [Food poverty: How to seek \(and give\) help - BBC Food](#)

You can also see some local advice on help and support, as well as food banks here: [Food banks and food support in Haringey | Haringey Council](#).

Are you concerned about the impact that cold weather could have on your health?

If you're 65 or over, or in one of the other at-risk groups, it's important to get medical help as soon as you feel unwell.

You can get help and advice from:

- a pharmacy – pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor
- your GP – you may be able to speak to a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to
- NHS 111 – go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111 if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do.

The sooner you get advice, the sooner you're likely to get better.

In an emergency, go to A&E immediately or call 999.

Look out for hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous drop in body temperature below 35C (normal body temperature is around 37C). It's a medical emergency that needs to be treated in hospital.

Symptoms of hypothermia include:

- Shivering
- Pale, cold and dry skin – skin and lips may turn blue or grey (on black or brown skin this may be easier to see on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet)
- Slurred speech
- Slow breathing
- Tiredness or confusion

A baby with hypothermia may be:

- Cold to touch
- Floppy
- Unusually quiet and sleepy and may refuse to feed

Go to A&E or call 999 if you think you, your child, or someone you know has hypothermia.

Have you considered getting vaccinated for the winter?

If yes, signpost them to the follow page, where they can check eligibility and be directed to booking pages:

[Seasonal vaccinations and winter health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

If no, signpost them to the same page. It may be helpful to gently, but non-judgmentally suggest that if they have questions about the vaccines or are hesitant, they can speak to their GP or pharmacist or read official advice pages such as [Why vaccination is important and the safest way to protect yourself - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Do you have any underlying medical conditions and/or take any medications?

If yes, make them aware that they are more vulnerable to adverse health outcomes due to the cold weather and to be aware of how to keep themselves and their home warm in the cold and what signs/symptoms to look out for and how to respond.

Medicines should be stored in the fridge if specified, including during cold weather.

Do you live alone and have anyone that regularly check on you? (this may include family, friends, carers and health professionals)

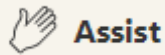
If the answer is yes, could they ask a relative or friend to phone to check you are not having difficulties during the cold period.

If the individual is struggling to cope and over 50 years old, signpost to [Reach and Connect](#) (020 3196 1905).

Alternatively, [Connected Communities](#) may also be able to assist and provide support. Their team can be contacted at ConnectedCommunities@Haringey.gov.uk

How are you feeling in this cold weather?

It is important to check-in with people during episodes of cold weather as cold can affect one's mental wellbeing as well as their physical health. If you feel the individual would benefit from local mental health support, you can find information in the Act section.



Would you like to hear about the support available for energy bills?

The [Haringey, Here to Help](#) pages will help you find information about the services available to you, including the cost of living booklet. These services include SHINE London, a service offering advice for home efficiency and available grants.

There are further national support services available that can be found in the London cost of living very brief advice;

- <https://www.mecclink.co.uk/london/cost-of-living/>

Furthermore you can access advice through the government website

- [Help with your energy bills - Help for Households](#)

Further information can also be found, including advisors to contact, through Citizen's Advice.

- [Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills - Citizens Advice](#)

Would you like to know how to access local warm spaces?

As mentioned above, they can access information about the Haringey Warm Welcome Programme here: [Haringey Warm Welcome | Haringey Council](#).

Please also direct them to the Greater London Authority map, which collates information on warm spaces available across London. [Warm Welcome Campaign](#).



Are you a social tenant and need to seek advice from the council on appropriateness of your property in cold temperatures?

They can get support from:

- your [local council - https://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing)
- an accredited home improvement agency or handyman service through [First Stop Care Advice](#) for older people, or [Home Improvement Agencies](#) (0300 124 0315)
- your social letting agency
- your social housing provider
- [Citizen's Advice](#)

Are you a private tenant/homeowner and need to seek advice from the council on appropriateness of your property in cold temperatures?

If you live in a rented home, you may be able to get help and support from the following:

- your [local council - https://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing)

- your social letting agency
 - [Citizen's Advice](#)
 - your private landlord
-
- If you own your home (owner occupied) you may be able to get help and support from an accredited home improvement agency or handyperson service through [First Stop Care Advice](#) for older people, or [Home Improvement Agencies](#) (0300 124 0315).

Are you homeless or rough sleeping and need a place to stay?

Contact Streetlink if you are street homeless in extreme weather or worries about someone who is: <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

The heat can also affect your mental wellbeing as well as your health, do you need any mental health and wellbeing support?

If yes, see the Mental Health & Wellbeing section in the Act section.



How to warm someone up with hypothermia

- Move the person indoors or somewhere sheltered as quickly as possible
- Remove any wet clothing, wrap them in a blanket, sleeping bag or dry towel, making sure their head is covered
- Give them a warm non-alcoholic drink and some sugary food like chocolate if they're fully awake
- Keep them awake by talking to them until help arrives
- Make sure you or someone else stays with them

DO NOT

- Do not use a hot bath, hot water bottle or heat lamp to warm them up
- Do not rub their arms, legs, feet or hands
- Do not give them alcohol to drink

Immediately call 999 or take the person to the nearest A&E if you suspect they have hypothermia.

Mental Health Support and Resources

If they are in crisis and need urgent access to support, you should seek immediate expert advice and assessment.

If someone's life is at risk – for example they have seriously injured themselves or taken an overdose and you do not feel that you can keep yourself or someone else safe, call 999 or go to A&E now.

If you, or someone else, has an urgent mental health need, you can get help from the Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment service (CRHT). This Team provides urgent outreach within 4 hours, for those at risk of psychiatric hospital admission, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Telephone: 0800 151 0023

Website: <https://www.beh-mht.nhs.uk/patients-and-carers/support-in-a-crisis.htm>

Emergency help is also available at Accident and Emergency departments at the North Middlesex and Whittington hospitals. Specialist mental health teams are available around the clock, who will see anyone aged over 16 who might be suffering from mental health problems in A&E, or as an inpatient.

Other resources for help during a crisis:

Samaritans - (All age groups) Tel: 116 123, open 24 hours a day.

Papyrus - (Young people) Tel: 0800 068 41 41; Text: 07786209697; Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Opening hours - Mon-Fri: 10am-10pm, weekends: 2pm-10pm & bank holidays: 2pm-5pm

If you're under 19, you can also call 0800 1111 to talk to Childline. The number will not appear on your phone bill.

24-hour crisis line: Every mental health trust in London has established a 24/7 crisis line for people of all ages, free to call, to provide advice to those in crisis. These crisis lines are supported by trained mental health advisors 365 days a year. The number for Barnet, Enfield and Haringey residents is 0800 151 0023.

Safe Haven: Safe Haven is a mental health crisis support line (0800 953 0223) for Haringey residents aged 18+, open 7 days a week, 5pm-8pm. The service delivers short-term, non-medical interventions, to reduce the crisis and isolation, creating safety/wellbeing plans.

There is also very brief advice for mental wellbeing and Urgent mental health, linked below:

- <https://www.mecclink.co.uk/london/mental-wellbeing/>
- <https://www.mecclink.co.uk/london/mental-health-support-urgent/>

If you are not able to speak to your local NHS urgent mental health helpline and you need help urgently for a mental health issue, but it's not a life-threatening emergency, you should call 111 who will tell you the right place to get help.

Non-urgent mental health support

For non-urgent mental health support, encourage the person to contact their GP. Always give reassurances that there are lots of sources for support however they wish to access and use them.

Haringey's Mental Health Resource Hub provides a wealth of knowledge to support residents in staying mentally healthy. The resources, tools and mobile-based apps include free include information on mental health conditions, symptoms, therapies and where to go if you need further support.



www.haringey.gov.uk/mh-resource-hub

Council resources for professionals

- The [UK Health Security Agency's \(UKHSA\) Adverse Weather and Health Plan \(AWHP\)](#) aims to protect individuals and communities from the health effects of adverse weather and build community resilience. The plan outlines the important areas where the public, independent, voluntary, health and social care sector and organisations, along with local

communities, can work together to maintain and improve integrated arrangements for planning and response to deliver the best outcomes possible during adverse weather, such as cold weather.

- The council's emergency planning and resilience team has a web-page on major emergencies that is kept up-to-date, which can be accessed here: [Major emergencies | Haringey Council](#) - this covers flooding and power cuts in terms of winter risks.

If you have any questions or feedback on this Very Brief Advice intervention, please contact the Haringey Public Health team at:

PublicHealth@Haringey.gov.uk

This resource was developed by Dr Jacob Bradshaw and Angharad Shambler, with input from members of the Adverse Weather Preparedness Group in Haringey.