

**Gateway reference:** 18232

**26 October 2012**

**TO:**

SHA Cluster CEs, PCT Cluster CEs, LA CEs,

**CC:**

NHS CB, HPA CE, PCT and NHS Trust CEs, NHS Trust Medical Directors, CQC CE, PCT DPHs, GPs, PCT Medical Directors, PCT lead nurses, Directors of Housing and Planning, Directors of Adult Social Services, Directors of Children Social Services, Professional Bodies (RCGP, RCP, RPSGB, RCN, CPHVA, Community and District Nurses Association), Care Associations (National Care Association, ECCA, Registered Nursing Homes Association, UK Care Home Care Association and Carers UK), NHS Foundation Trusts CEs, Monitor, DCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division, Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat

**Re: COLD WEATHER PLAN FOR ENGLAND – 2012**

*Protecting Health and Reducing Harm from Severe Cold*

This letter is to alert you to the publication of the Cold Weather Plan for England - 2012 (CWP).

From today, the following documents will be available on the DH website at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/tag/cold-weather-plan/> :

- The Cold Weather Plan for England – 2012;
- ‘Supporting the Case’ a companion document giving further information on a range of topics related to the CWP, including an evaluation of the first year of the CWP and further information about the Cold Weather Alerts and messages to the public; and
- a series of ‘action cards’ based on the Plan for easy use by organisations, staff and the public

Severe cold weather is a major public health challenge in England. The effect of cold weather on health is one of the most significant, yet least recognised, factors causing death and illness in the country. The CWP sets out a series of clear actions to minimise the effects of severe cold weather on health, to be taken by:

- the NHS, social care and other public agencies;

- professionals working with vulnerable people, and
- individuals and local communities

The CWP is based on a severe cold weather alert warning system which has been developed with the Met Office to alert key stakeholders to the likelihood of severe cold weather in different parts of the country so they can take appropriate action.

The purpose of the CWP is to enhance resilience and wider health promotion in the event of severe cold weather. It is an important component of overall winter and emergency planning. This was reconfirmed by David Flory and Shaun Gallagher in their 13 September 2012 joint letter to the NHS and local authorities, *Preparations for winter planning and reporting 2012/13* (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/winter-reporting-2012-13/>). Also, as announced on 13<sup>th</sup> September, the CWP is supported again by the Warm Homes, Healthy People fund, which aims to support Local Authorities and local partners to reduce death and morbidity in England due to cold housing in the coming winter. More information on the fund is available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/09/lac-whhp-fund/>

Following extensive evaluation and stakeholder engagement throughout the year, we have made a number of revisions to this year's Plan, although the basic actions and thrust of last year's plan remain the same.

## Summary of key changes to the Cold Weather Plan for England - 2012

Overall, we have focussed the main CWP on actions and have updated and made much of the supporting material from last year available in the companion document '*Supporting the Case*'.

### Cold Weather Alerts:

- To emphasise that preparatory planning for winter takes place throughout the year, we have added a Level 0 to the previous four Cold Weather Alert levels. On the 1<sup>st</sup> November we will move to Level 1, general Winter Preparedness.
- Levels 1- 3 remain the same. However, in agreement with the Cabinet Office, we have clarified the wording of a Level 4 national emergency.
- Detailed changes to improve the appearance and relevance of the Cold Weather Alerts to make these more user friendly have been made based on stakeholders comments.

### Detail Changes to the Action Tables (Section 3)

- Most of the key actions from 2011 are carried forward into the 2012 plans, but we have amended the wording in light of comments received and changed the layout of the action tables. We have also separated out actions for commissioners and providers as well as for GPs.

### Recommended Next Steps:

- We have added a new Section 5, 'Next Steps', to clarify that the Cold Weather Plan is a good practice document and the actions denoted are illustrative. It is up to each locality to consider the actions in this plan and adapt them and

incorporate them, as appropriate to the local situation, as a component of wider winter planning arrangements.

- We have recommended that NHS and Local Authority commissioners with Local Resilience Forums in each locality:
  - review the actions in the CWP and ensures that they are understood locally
  - review or audit the distribution of the Cold Weather Alerts across the health and social care systems locally to satisfy themselves that the Cold Weather Alerts, when they are issued, reach those colleagues and organisations which need to take appropriate actions.
  - seek assurance that organisations and key stakeholders are taking appropriate actions in light of the cold weather alert messages.

**SHA clusters, Local Authorities and PCT clusters are asked to:**

A summary of key amendments and web-links to materials will be advertised via emergency planning routes and professional bulletins. However, you and copy recipients of this letter are asked to discuss the CWP with those organisations and teams that need to start taking action as part of your overall winter preparedness work.

Yours ever,



**PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER  
CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER**



**David Flory, CBE  
Deputy NHS Chief Executive**



**Prof Viv Bennett  
Director of Nursing**



**Shaun Gallagher  
Director General  
Social Care, Local  
Government & Care  
Partnerships**