

Winter Pressures Planning

Introduction

There are a large number of avoidable deaths each winter in England primarily due to heart and lung conditions from cold temperatures. The reasons more people die in winter are complex and interlinked with inadequate heating and poorly insulated housing and health inequalities as well as circulating infectious diseases, particularly flu and norovirus, and the extent of snow and ice.

The multiple impacts of cold weather on health, result in excess winter deaths (e.g. 567 extra deaths in Nottingham in the winter months 2012- 2015 compared with the expected average number of non-winter deaths).

The winter period not only sees a significant rise in deaths but also a substantial increase in illnesses. The Cold Weather Plan (CWP) for England therefore helps to raise awareness of the harm to health from cold, and provides guidance on how to prepare for and respond to cold weather¹.

PHE's cold weather plan (CWP) and NICE Guidance on excess winter deaths offer recommendations to NHS, public health, social care and other community organisations, to support vulnerable people who have health, housing or economic circumstances that increase their risk of harm.

The aim of this briefing paper therefore is to outline a summary of strategies that have been agreed and are currently being implemented within Nottingham City Council. The paper will present an overview of universal plans and more specific plans as they relate to vulnerable groups. This approach is in line with the Health and Wellbeing Board's (HWBB) aspiration to reduce health inequalities in Nottingham City. HWBB is being asked to comment on these plans and to seek assurance that member organizations have developed similar strategies to reduce the impact of cold weather this winter.

National Winter Plans

Nationally, NHS England communications team coordinates an overarching 'Stay Well this winter' (SWTW) campaign with Public Health England. This consists of two phases:

¹ PHE. The Cold Weather Plan for England. Protecting health and reducing harm from cold weather

Phase 1 –Flu vaccination campaign (runs from 9th October to 29th October 2017) with aims to:

- Promote flu vaccination uptake amongst pregnant women, children aged 2-3 years, (targeting their parents), and those with long term health conditions, particularly respiratory diseases (e.g. COPD or bronchitis)
- Improve awareness of the nasal spray among parents of children aged 2-3 years
- Continue to promote reasons to get the flu vaccine amongst pregnant women

The Flu phase of SWTW consists of TV, radio, online, Google search, social marketing, BAME and accessibility activity for disabled groups and partnerships. This phase is already underway.

Phase 2 – Winter campaign (runs from 6th November to 17th December 2017)

The aim of this phase is to:

- Maintain high levels of awareness of the winter campaign among at-risk groups (C2DE adults aged 65 and over², those with long term conditions and their carers)
- Prompt those who are at risk of hospital admission to the visit pharmacy for advice and/or treatment for seasonal illnesses, as well as urging them to have the flu jab
- Promote trust in the NHS and belief that the NHS is looking after people

The winter phase will consist of TV, partnership marketing, Direct marketing (DWP mailings), organic social marketing, BAME and accessibility activity for disabled groups.

A Cold Weather Alert service operates from 1 November to 31 March, based on Met Office forecasts and data.

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Flu

NHS England Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire team are responsible for commissioning the flu vaccination programme locally and have a flu action plan which encourages all providers to increase flu vaccination uptake through various strategies (including funding midwives at NUH, funding reminder letters for 2&3 year olds and funding vaccination of all special school pupils). In line with

² NRS social grades are a system of demographic classification used in the United Kingdom. They were originally developed by the National Readership Survey (NRS) to classify readers, but are now used by many other organisations for wider applications and have become a standard for market research. C2DE adults represent the working class

NHSE's and PHE's winter plans, Public health have developed a flu action plan for NCC. Some of these actions are complete and include:

- Production and dissemination of a press release focused on pregnant women and children aged 2 and 3 circulated to local media
- Flu Action Plan has been developed and shared with partners
- Development of tailored comms messages to other groups and using existing channels – Care Homes, Home Care, Employee health and wellbeing, schools, public health commissioned services (e.g. weight management, sexual health), CCG staff
- Flu performance presented at Health Scrutiny with recommendations actioned
- Flu performance for previous year raised at Children and Adult's Leadership team meeting
- Flu uptake data by GP practices presented at CCG Clinical Council
- Flu messages displayed on all Council display screens and staff comms on the intranet
- Staff survey to be developed at the end of flu season
- A review of procedures including responsibility for staff vaccination, and infection prevention and control in relevant contracts (care homes, 0-19s, sexual health etc.)

Winter Campaign

PHE's CWP is part of a wider response required to tackle excess winter deaths (EWDs) and there is a strong argument for a multi-agency approach to reducing the wider determinants of winter deaths and disease. This is not something that can be tackled in the winter alone and requires a year-round strategic approach by HWBs, directors of public health and commissioners to assess needs and to commission, plan and implement interventions. This section of the report describes specific actions that have been put in place by NCC. It does not cover actions that are the responsibility of LHRP or NHS provider and commissioning organizations.

PHE's Cold weather plan identifies four population groups that are most at risk of excess winter deaths:

- Older people,
- The very young
- People with pre-existing medical conditions
- People whose health, housing or economic circumstances put them at greater risk of harm from cold weather.

NCC Cold Weather Plan for 2017/18

In NCC phase 2 plans are closely aligned to the national winter campaign which is being led by NUH this year. It is expected that these plans will include specific messages for individuals in the risk groups identified above. NUH are currently producing a city comms plan that will be shared for distribution through various channels. This phase commences on the 6th of November and runs till the 17th of November and is characterised by a combination of TV, radio, press, outdoor, emails to those subscribed to PHE campaigns and digital campaigns in addition to direct marketing. Information will be included in the monthly HWB bulletin and Nottingham Arrow's November edition.

Public health have explored the possibility of securing advertising space on city dressing around Nottingham. This appears to be difficult at short notice. The possibility of using the council's advertising platforms has also been explored, but the campaign is one that requires significant lead time and planning because many of the current platforms may already have been allocated for key corporate marketing campaigns.

There's also a Cascade system in place to communicate any cold weather alerts and messages to staff/public/media via the DPH.

Older people

In addition to flu vaccination, a number of key messages will be targeted at older people during the second phase of the campaign. This include, but is not limited to:

- How to stay warm
- Reminders to service heating systems every year by a qualified engineer to ensure it's running safely and efficiently.
- Advice about air vents and especially in homes that have wood-burning, coal or gas heaters
- Frozen water pipes and what to do if they burst; Make sure you know where the main stopcock is and check that it's easy to turn so you can turn off the water if you need to.
- Smoke alarms
- What to do if they start to feel unwell

Messages will be distributed through the following links:

- The Age Friendly Nottingham Bulletin and steering group member's communications channels

- The Health and Wellbeing Bulletin
- Nottingham Arrow
- Strategic housing groups
- Age UK – annual campaign
- Click Nottingham
- 60+ service
- An appeal through the NCVS
- Adult services community support hubs
- Pharmacies and GP surgeries
- Trading Standards
- Libraries
- Faith communities
- GP surgeries

Young Children and people with pre-existing medical conditions

Key messages for parents and carers of young children during the winter campaign will be focused on reinforcing the importance of the flu vaccine amongst these group. NCC is working closely with NHSE to ensure that reminder letters are sent out to parents in mid-November.

Individuals with pre-existing conditions will be encouraged to take up the offer of flu vaccine from their GP if eligible. Key messages will include what they need to do if they start to feel unwell, and reminders to stay warm, making sure that they are aware of all the help they can get to ensure adequate heating and reminders to seek help from pharmacies or GPs if they develop flu-like symptoms. Messages for individuals with LTC will include reminders to order repeat medication ahead of the Christmas and New Year period. Public health will align and disseminate social media messages with those recommended by NHSE.

People whose health, housing or economic circumstances put them at greater risk of harm from cold weather.

All local authorities are obligated to produce a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). The SWEP ensures that no one is street homeless in periods of extreme cold weather. The SWEP is instigated when the temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees (or below) for three consecutive

nights. It operates outside of usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks that govern access to housing and is targeted at Homeless people / street sleepers who are vulnerable to the cold due to exposure to outdoor temperatures, and other factors which increase vulnerability to cold such as social isolation, smoking, substance dependencies, mental illness and chronic and respiratory diseases which are more prevalent in this population. Its aim is to reduce risks to health and wellbeing of new, repeat and entrenched rough sleepers (in general but also particularly from cold weather). Nottingham City Council has a SWEP designed to support individuals in this risk category and include details of provider organizations and charities that support the homeless and rough sleepers. Additional information is available in Nottingham's Cold Weather Provision Plan.

Fuel Poverty

A fuel poor household is defined as one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use and to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth. In England, this is defined as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in other occupied rooms. The current definition of fuel poverty states that it is driven by three key factors: energy efficiency of the home; energy costs and household income. 12.6% of households in Nottingham experience fuel poverty (PHE, 2014).

Out of all the core cities however, Nottingham has had the second highest reduction in homes classed as in fuel poverty with only Birmingham having a better performance with a 6% reduction compared to Nottingham's 5.8%.

Much of this reduction has been due to the large cross-city energy efficiency scheme – Greener Housing – that the City Council has delivered with Nottingham City Homes and Nottingham Energy Partnership. To fund these schemes, Nottingham City Council secured one of the highest shares of Government funding of all UK councils. Over 2,500 private homes and 4,200 social houses have been insulated in the city, as well as fitting solar panels to provide free electricity to 4,000 NCH tenants.

Robin Hood Energy was also set up by the City Council in 2015 to tackle fuel poverty. As a not-for-profit company it provides low-cost energy and a special tariff is available to anyone living within the Nottingham city boundary.

Local Hospital Preparedness

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trusts have made provision for extra hospital and community beds and made changes to the way patients are assessed for their post-hospital care needs.

Up to 30 extra respiratory beds will open at Nottingham City Hospital between December and early April.

Additional community care packages, assessment capacity and community beds have been available from the beginning of October to coincide with a new way of assessing patients' post hospital care needs outside of the hospital setting, which will lead to hospital beds being used more effectively. This aims to reduce length of stay for medically safe patients and delays with transfers of care.

Hospital staff are also being encouraged to get their flu vaccines because of the risk of transmission to any vulnerable people they come into contact with such as pregnant women, older people and new-born babies.

Local GPs have sent out letters to groups eligible to receive the flu vaccine from their GP – people over the age of 65, people living with long term conditions, pregnant women and children aged 2 and 3 years.

Recommendations

The actions required to tackle winter pressures are beyond the scope, remit and capabilities of one single organization. HWBB is being asked to consider the following:

1. Whilst a whole systems approach to winter planning is recommended, HWBB members should seek assurance that member organisations and key stakeholders are taking appropriate steps to plan for winter pressures
2. HWBB members should seek assurance that member organisations have considered PHE's Cold Weather Plan and satisfy themselves that the suggested actions and the Cold Weather Alert service are understood across their locality.
3. The voluntary and community sector can help reduce vulnerability and to support the planning and response to cold weather, particularly through identifying and engaging vulnerable people. HWBB is asked to consider and explore opportunities for closer partnership working with these groups.

4. Action to reduce cold related harm should be considered core business by HWBB and included in Joint Strategic Need Assessments (JSNAs) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).