

News story: Cold weather alerts and health warnings issued

Keep warm keep well warnings are being issued by Public Health England (PHE) today (24 November 2017), as weather forecasts suggest the winter's first blast of cold weather is on its way.

Met Office forecasters have said today that by tomorrow (Saturday) temperatures in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber will fall below 2°C.

This first drop in temperatures has prompted PHE's Extreme Events team to remind people all over the country that before cold weather arrives is the best time to prepare.

Dr Thomas Waite, of the Extreme Events team, said:

We're well used to winter in this country so most people know what to do to protect their health before and during cold spells.

But there are people who may not take precautions and who are at a very real risk. We know that every winter thousands of people fall ill and many die because of exposure to cold both in the home and while outdoors.

Those most at-risk include older people, very young children and those with conditions like heart and lung disease. That's why every cold season we urge people to look out for family, friends and neighbours who may be at risk. Ask yourself if you could check on a neighbour to see if there's anything they need?

Paul Gundersen, Chief Operational Meteorologist at the Met Office, said:

Colder air has now reached most parts of England, with temperatures expected to fall further by Saturday, when the cold will be accentuated by strengthening winds. Wintry showers are also likely in places, but any snow showers are expected to be confined largely to higher ground. A temporary incursion of warmer air is expected on Monday, with the colder air forecast to return by Tuesday.

You should:

- look out for friends and family who may be vulnerable to the cold and ensure they have access to warm food and drinks and are managing to heat their homes adequately
- try to maintain indoor temperatures to at least 18°C, particularly if

- you are not mobile, have long term illness or are 65 or over
- stay tuned for weather forecasts, ensure you are stocked with food and medications in advance, have deliveries or ask a friend to help
 - take weather into account when planning your activity over the following days
 - seek entitlements and benefits such as Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments, which are available to some
 - avoid exposing yourself to cold or icy outdoor conditions if you are at a higher risk of cold related illness or falls.
 - discuss with friends and neighbours about clearing snow and ice from in front of your house and public walkways nearby

Power and utility companies have schemes which make at-risk groups a priority for reconnection following power cuts. Find out if you meet the criteria and if so, sign up. Visit [ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk) for more information.

There's lots of useful advice on the [Stay Well This Winter website](#).

Dr Waite added:

We know that more deaths occur every winter in the UK than in the summer due to a wide range of causes including cold weather, influenza and other respiratory infections. The flu vaccination is the best protection we have against flu and it's really important to have it if you are eligible. If we all keep a close eye out for each other over the coming months hopefully we'll all be able to stay well this winter.