



Report of Michael Laing, Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update and provide assurance to the Health and Wellbeing Board of health and social care system preparedness for winter, in addition to wider partners plans.

Executive summary

- 2 County Durham Winter Planning Group is a seasonal multi-agency task and finish group convened since 2021 to oversee health and social care system preparedness for winter. Meetings begin in September and are held fortnightly in the lead up to and throughout the winter season.
- 3 Plans have a shared aim to prevent excess winter deaths and cold related ill health by:
 - (a) Managing demand on health and social care systems and other related services over the winter season.
 - (b) Protecting populations against surges in winter illnesses such as flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.
 - (c) Reducing the impact of cold related ill-health on vulnerable populations.
 - (d) Planning and responding to severe cold weather events.
- 4 The group is chaired by the Director of Public Health with the Strategic Commissioning Manager (OP PDSI) acting as vice chair.
- 5 Work covers the following themes: NHS / ICB - Primary Care / Social Care / Public Health / Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) / Local Resilience Forum (LRF) / Communities / welfare and financial support / Housing / Highways / Data and intelligence / Communications.

- 6 The body of the report provides more detailed information across all themes. The following bullet points provide an assurance summary.
- **Projections** – Wet and cold periods are forecast to be similar to normal. No adverse flu or Covid projections, vaccination plans continue per routine delivery dates. Learning from last year and LRF, CCU exercises embedded into plans.
 - **Plans in place** – Assurance that the workforce and wider partners are delivering on plans and ready to escalate actions.
 - **Data** – Continue to seek further datasets to inform targeted work now and future interventions to address vulnerabilities.
 - **Communities** – Wealth of very local support (constantly adapting) across the county for vulnerable and ‘at risk’ individuals.
 - **Welfare and financial resources** – Processes in place to support local residents – with a focus this year on pension credits.
 - **Communications and enhanced interventions** – Building on the assets and interventions from previous years to enhance winter wellness awareness, understanding and brief interventions.
- 7 The Winter Planning Group ensures learning opportunities are captured and will share good practice to help shape future delivery.
- 8 The Winter Planning Group reports to the Local A&E Delivery Board (LADB) and provides updates to Durham County Council Corporate Management Team; County Durham Care Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Protection Assurance and Development Partnership as required.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
- (a) Note the content of this report.

Background

- 10 County Durham Winter Planning Group is a seasonal multi-agency task and finish group convened since 2021 to oversee health and social care system preparedness for winter. Meetings begin in September of each year and throughout the winter season.
- 11 The group adopts a flexible County Durham Together approach using data-informed proactive outreach work and planned protective measures to:
 - (a) Understand the expected demand; highlight where this demand creates pressure on the system and seek ways to mitigate.
 - (b) Gain assurance that system plans are fit-for-purpose; that interdependencies and potential for mutual aid are identified and to work collaboratively to mobilise the interoperability between plans.
 - (c) Explore opportunities for additional collaboration across partners including the voluntary and community sector (VCS) for the benefit of our communities.
 - (d) Integrate protective measures such as brief interventions and social marketing into winter planning and to coordinate with new and innovative work e.g. the welcome spaces / family hubs.
 - (e) Support the development and use of the Durham Index of Need (DIoN) dataset to inform data driven activity (preventative and responsive) supported by the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment Group.
 - (f) Ensure learning opportunities and sharing of best and/or good practice to help shape future delivery.
- 12 The programme of work covers the County Durham population but is also shared wider by those organisations with a wider footprint.
- 13 The following sections provide an overview of the relevant plans in place, and provides information on the roles, responsibilities and actions of agencies in respect to seasonal and adverse weather events.

NHS and ICB

- 14 National NHS and local Integrated Care Board (ICB) provide health system responsibility, planning, oversight and coordination to ensure that health plans are in place to respond to operational pressures and deliver operational resilience and ensure all high-impact interventions and actions are implemented.

- 15 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities set by Gov / NHSE / ICB to all partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ambulance handovers. ○ Waiting times in A&E. ○ Sustaining the elective recovery programme. ○ Hospital Discharge. ○ Urgent Community Response. ○ Admissions avoidance. ○ Single point of access / integrated coordination centre ○ Hospital at Home. • Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) Hubs. • Mutual support available if a partner is under pressure e.g. nursing oversight for care homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing bed capacity – winter beds / surge beds / Transfer of Care Hub / discharge lounge, bed modelling. • Organisational Executive Triumvirate improvement programme – Improving patient safety and experience by improved flow. • Hospital @ Home & Frailty SDEC service • Same Day Emergency Services extension of provision • Single point of access – Integrated Care Hub • Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Recovery Plan

Social Care

- 16 Local authority social care provision will support and develop the work with NHS and ICBs to ensure an integrated approach across health and social care, including commissioning intermediate care services that help keep people well at home; preventing avoidable hospital admissions and supporting timely and effective hospital discharges.
- 17 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Adult Social Care providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ongoing Care Academy support with recruitment campaigns. ○ Ongoing Care Academy support with training – e.g. Encouraging vaccinations qualification. ○ Care Homes: visitor communications for resident health protection. ○ Domiciliary Care: Care Academy 'Walkers to Drivers' programme to increase capacity. ○ IPC measures: UKHSA / IPC team advice guidance and support. ○ Care Home residents and adult social care staff vaccination programme. ○ Collaborative approach to managing system demand, capacity, incidents and risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding (Better Care Fund, ASC Discharge Fund and MSIF Workforce Fund) has been used for initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial support for the adult social care provider workforce. ○ Extra Intermediate Care Plus (ICP+) Block bed capacity. ○ Additional home care capacity through the 'short term assistance service'. ○ Support for unpaid carers, people with MH needs or dementia and with hospital discharge. ○ Additional workforce capacity for DCC AHS Adult Care. ○ Care Academy provider recruitment support.

Public Health

- 18 The Director of Public Health has a duty to protect the health of the local population including the strategic assurance that local plans are in place in the preparation for seasonal adverse weather. Moreover, Public Health plays a vital role coordinating, supporting and influencing commissioning decisions across health and social care and wider public services to improved health and reduce health inequalities.
- 19 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and delivery of seasonal weather plans. • Robust surveillance and outbreak management processes. • Public Health on-call rota in place. • Continued focus on the most vulnerable and at risk groups. • Promotion of infection prevention controls to prevent the spread of infections. • Monthly winter planning system updates slide set. • Comprehensive adverse weather communication assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse weather protecting health plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UKHSA Weather Health Alerts. ○ Action cards for 12 front line services. ○ Resources available on the DCC intranet / google drive. • Vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID-19 booster and flu vaccination programmes key to prevent illness. ○ Primary Care Networks and Pharmacies delivering the autumn booster and flu vaccinations. ○ DCC and Social Care staff vaccination programme. ○ Use of local data to target low take up areas. ○ 2-3 yrs flu vaccination programme. ○ RSV vaccination programme.

Civil Contingencies Unit and Local Resilience Forum

- 20 The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) is the local authority's point of contact for emergency planning and business continuity both internally and externally in response to incidents and emergencies.
- 21 The CCU is also a conduit for information for multiple agencies through the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and has a duty to cooperate with other agencies including emergency and health services, to assess risk and maintain plans to prevent emergencies and reduce, control and mitigate their effects, including risks which pose a threat to human life.
- 22 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty discharged through risk management plans; exercise and scenario testing, business continuity, warning and informing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Call – CCU, EMT, Highways, Property Services, Emergency Duty Team, Care Connect etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of Emergency Plans such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LRF Multi-Agency Incident Procedures. ○ LRF Severe Weather Plan. ○ LRF Multi Agency Flood Plan. ○ DCC Corporate Emergency Plan. ○ DCC Emergency Assistance Centre Plan. ○ Local Community Emergency Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC and LRF store of emergency supplies and equipment to support welfare provision in event of incident. • DCC engaged with 40+ community organisations to encourage development of local community resilience/emergency plans and 50+Town and Parish Councils.
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Communities and the Voluntary and Community Sector

23 County Durham is a large county with a wide range of settlements and landscapes. There is a wealth of very local support across the county for vulnerable and ‘at risk’ individuals. The intervention and support to communities delivered through the contact points are robust, known to work and have the systems in place to be delivered.

24 Support responds to community need so the examples listed are a flavour of what may (or may not) be offered in a local area.

Summary of options that can be provided	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local support across the county for vulnerable and ‘at risk’ individuals. Examples that may be available in response to community needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emergency Provisions – Emergency packs which can be distributed to those in crisis tailored to suit particular needs, e.g. food, clothes, fuel voucher, personal hygiene items. ○ Hot meal services / lunch clubs – providing meals at set venues or delivered to home. ○ Befriending schemes – to engage and befriend isolated residents. ○ Community and social activities – regular drop-in sessions to meet with others. ○ Good neighbours – helping with shopping, picking up prescriptions, clearing pavements, putting bins out, lighting fires etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome Spaces ○ DCA Community Connectors ○ Area Action Partnerships ○ Community Champions ○ Better Together Forums ○ Social Prescribers. • Main coordination: via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voluntary and Community Sector ○ County Durham Together ○ VCSE Winter Resilience ○ County Durham Partnership. • Durham Index of Need(DIoN): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using DIoN to target priority areas and targeted groups.

Welfare and financial support

25 Welfare and financial support are available for residents as the cost-of-living continues to squeeze household budgets. Help and support is available for those experiencing financial hardship.

26 Free and impartial advice and support is available with key information disseminated to partners and wider council services to identify and encourage those in need to get help as soon as possible.

Summary of advice and support is available.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to support and advice include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The council's help with your money web pages provide a wide range of information to support access to financial support and advice. ○ Households that struggle to pay their monthly energy bills or keep their home warm enough, may be entitled to help. The council's help with your heating and energy bills web pages provide a range of advice and support. Additionally, guidance on home Energy Efficiency Measures is also available via our - Warm Homes web pages. ○ Residents can receive benefits advice or help with a benefits appeal from the council's - Welfare Rights Team with additional benefits support, advice, and financial help information available on our - benefits support pages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC Webpages – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help with your money - Durham County Council ○ Help with your heating and energy bills ○ Welfare Rights ○ Warm Homes ○ Benefits Support ○ Household Support Fund ○ Help with food costs ○ Apply for free school meals ○ Pension Credit Campaign ○ Welfare Assistance
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Housing

- 27 The effect of seasonal weather and the protection housing can give, can be a complex area to identify support. Research estimates that we spend around 90% of our time indoors, with 65% of this spent at home.
- 28 Good quality homes and housing environments can protect and improve health and wellbeing and prevent physical and mental ill-health. Conversely, poor housing is linked to a variety of conditions such as respiratory diseases, hypothermia, infections, allergies, depression and anxiety. Alongside this is an individual's financial and physical ability to maintain a warm and healthy home and must be considered in any interventions.
- 29 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during cold weather and other severe weather events for homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. • Targeted communities – Homelessness, GRT, supported living, communal areas. • Care Connect – emergency response, falls, 'home from hospital service', 4x4's. 	<p>Adaptations and improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHCLG Damp & Mould Project – £130k to fund inspections of properties where tenants report damp & mould, or where properties are identified most at risk through day-to-day work. • Energy Team – Warm homes advice, Energy Company Obligation referrals (new boilers). • Homes Upgrade Grant – 30 'off-grid' homes identified for retrofit measures to improve energy efficiency.
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Highways

- 30 Local Authorities have a duty (Highways Act 1980) to 'ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice.' This duty discharged through a gritting, emergency response and highways programme.
- 31 The following table provides a summary of the work to be undertaken and delivered this year.

Summary of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gritting of the road network when weather thresholds are met.• Priority 1 (43% or 1733km of the network):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ key carriageways providing links to essential services, key facilities, critical infrastructure and other transport needs;○ SLA's with local residents and farmers with snow ploughs etc for rural places;○ SLA's with town and parish councils to clear snow and grit roads and paths in communities using volunteers;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priority 2 (a further 10% or 387km of the network):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Treated after priority 1 routes and only in times of prolonged winter weather.• 24hr emergency response arrangements – must be an immediate danger to public safety.• Salt stocks – a contingency of 42,000 tonnes to cover 160 runs providing a high degree of resilience.• 2500 salt bins are replenished throughout the winter season.• Supported by website and socials communications activity. www.durham.gov.uk/winterinfo

Data and intelligence

- 32 Data and intelligence plays a significant role in identifying vulnerable groups, settings and priority areas where targeted work can be focused to achieve the greatest impact.
- 33 The Durham Index of Need (DIoN) is a local thematic based needs index which helps inform targeted action and service delivery or can assist partners when looking to assess or prioritise population needs. DIoN can help identify and rank specific needs within County Durham aggregated to Middle Super Output Area level.
- 34 DIoN consists of eight domains, with a maximum of 9 individual measures per domain. (Where there are more than 5 measures within a domain an index score is provided).
- (a) Population
 - (b) Life expectancy and premature mortality
 - (c) Income & poverty
 - (d) Children and families
 - (e) Health care and wellbeing
 - (f) Education and skills

(g) Housing

(h) Crime

35 Throughout adverse weather periods such as the winter season these datasets are updated frequently and reported back to the Winter Planning Group to support the targeted work.

36 During other times of the year the datasets are updated in response to forecasted adverse weather events.

Communications

37 Communications are central to raising awareness, sign posting to services, promoting and supporting interventions and providing information to promote behaviour change.

38 Key messages will be shared via MECC briefings for frontline staff, volunteers and anyone who has face to face contact with people in communities to support wellbeing, neighbourliness, financial support and prevent avoidable ill health including infections and falls, and avoidable hospital admissions.

39 A range of printed materials and social media assets will be available for organisations and individuals.

40 A series of planned webinars will be used to share the available communication materials and to act as a training refresher of the impacts of seasonal adverse weather on health such as cold related ill-health.

41 Communication activity and coverage will be intensified in priority areas identified in the Durham Index of Need and to support community action.

42 Identified services below are specifically asked to support seasonal weather interventions.

Within DCC:

- Adult and Health Services – Adult Social Care, Extra Care, Domiciliary Care, Public Health.
- Childrens and Young Peoples service – Early Years, Family Hubs, Education.
- Neighbourhoods and Climate Change – Clean and Green Team, Community Action Team, Neighbourhood Wardens, Assisted Bin Collections, partnerships, AAP Coordinators.
- Regeneration, Economy and Growth – Care Connect, Housing, Libraries, Highways, Wellbeing services.

- Resources – Customer Services, Financial Support.
- Councillors

Partners:

- Community and District Nursing teams
- Primary Care
- Pharmacies
- Fire and Rescue Service (via home fire safety visits)
- Police
- Town and Parish Councils
- Wellbeing for Life

Community and Voluntary Sector:

- Advice in County Durham
- Durham Community Action
- Community Champions
- Welcome Spaces
- Crees (community spaces providing wellbeing support)

43 Examples of communication assets can be seen in Appendix 2.

Conclusion

44 The follow bullet points provide an assurance summary.

- **Projections** – Wet and cold periods are forecast to be similar to normal. No adverse Flu or Covid projections, vaccination plans continue per routine delivery dates. Learning from last year and LRF, CCU exercises embedded into plans.
- **Plans in place** – Assurance that the workforce and wider partners delivering on plans and are ready to escalate actions.
- **Data** – Continue to seek further datasets to inform targeted work now and future interventions to address vulnerabilities.
- **Communities** – Wealth of very local support (constantly adapting) across the county for vulnerable and ‘at risk’ individuals.
- **Welfare and financial resources** – Processes in place to support local residents – with a focus this year on pension credits.

- **Communications and enhanced interventions** – Building on the assets and interventions from previous years to enhance winter wellness awareness, understanding and brief interventions.

- 45 Health systems and wider partners plans will be reviewed by the Winter Planning Group on an annual basis and in collaboration with local partners. The review will include a debrief of last year's planning arrangements to identify lessons learnt which are then used to shape any future interventions and mitigation.
- 46 The Winter Planning Group reports to the Local A&E Delivery Board (LADB) and provides updates to Durham County Council Corporate Management Team; County Durham Care Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Protection Assurance and Development Partnership as required.
- 47 The group can also meet by exception at other times of the year in response to forecasted adverse weather events.
- 48 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the content of this report.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Health & Social Care Act 2012 refers to Section 2B NHS Act 2006 which places a duty on each local authority to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving and protecting the health of the people in its area.

Finance

No issues identified.

Consultation

Public Health will continue to engage and consult with partners in the development of system plans, interventions and actions for winter planning.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No issues identified.

Climate Change

No issues identified.

Human Rights

No issues identified.

Crime and Disorder

No issues identified.

Staffing

No issues identified.

Accommodation

No issues identified.

Risk

The reports identifies the work to reduce and mitigate risk relating to managing demand on health and social care systems and other related services over the winter season.

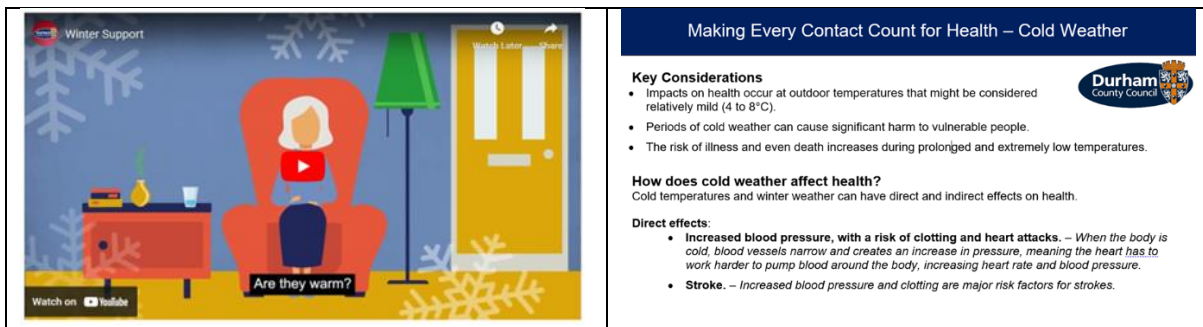
Procurement

No issues identified.

Appendix 2: Examples of communication assets

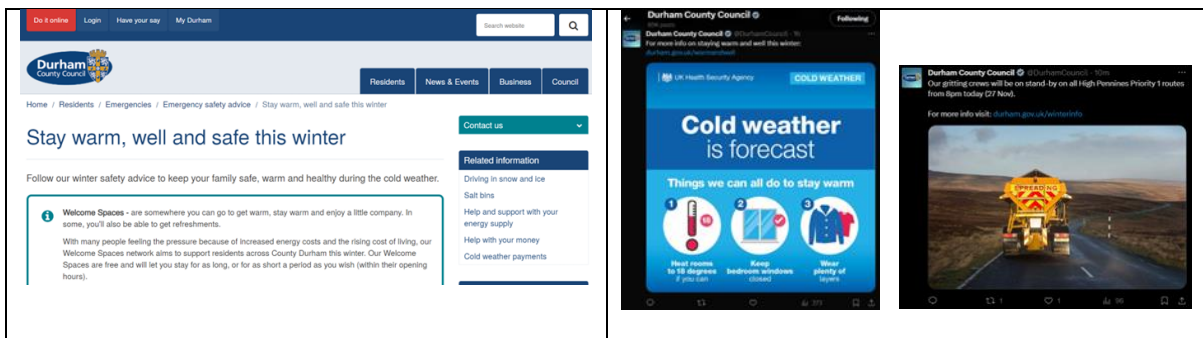


Front and back of the Warm, Well, and Well Hydrated postcards.



Winter support animation

Cold related ill-health Briefing



Main DCC web page for winter support

Examples of social media content

Finding financial help and support in County Durham

The rising cost-of-living is squeezing all of our household budgets, but help and support is available for those who need it.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, have rent arrears or are dealing with debt, you should get help as soon as possible. You can get free and impartial advice and support from a range of places.

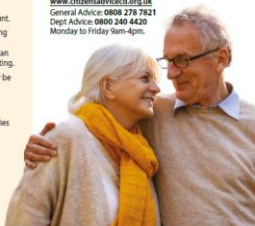
For information, visit www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithyourmoney


Our services

We can:

- Provide general information and advice on Council Tax discounts, disregards and exemptions, including single person discount.
- Discuss any difficulties you are having paying your Council Tax or Housing Benefit overpayment. We can discuss a payment plan to help with your overall household budgeting.
- Talk through your income to see if you may be entitled to help through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Provide advice on claiming a Discretionary Housing Payment if you are having difficulties in paying a shortfall in your rent.


www.durham.gov.uk
Tel: 0191 265 9000
Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5pm,
Friday 8.30am-4.30pm.



Welcome spaces  **Durham County Council**

Financial help leaflet.

Help all our residents stay well this winter...think H.O.M.E.




H HANDS – wash them before, during and after your visit

O ONLY – visit if you and your household are well

M MASK – please wear one if asked

E ELBOW – catch your coughs and sneezes in your elbow



Care Home poster and flyer.

CATCH IT

Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.



BIN IT

Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.



KILL IT

Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.



Durham County Council

Infection control poster.

Clean hands - healthy tummy



Wash, rinse, repeat for sickness bug defeat

Scan here to learn more: 

www.durham.gov.uk/warmandwell

Durham County Council

Infection control poster for Early Years.