

Preparing for Winter 2026

Individuals, families and community groups can take steps now to prepare for Winter 2026. Below are key risks and practical actions people can take to stay safe, healthy and connected.

Cold Weather

Cold weather can affect health even with temperatures as mild as 4 to 8°C. This can include heart attacks, strokes, falls, carbon monoxide poisoning and poor mental health. Those most at risk include: people with existing health conditions, people aged over 65yrs old, babies and young children, pregnant women, people experiencing homelessness and people living alone.

Actions that can be taken:

- Sign up to the UKHSA cold health alerts [Cold-Health Alerts - Met Office](#)
- Use the UKHSA Adverse Weather and Health plan action cards to help plan actions in response to cold weather [Cold-Health Alerting system and action cards - GOV.UK](#)
- Understand who is vulnerable to cold weather and share information on the risk of cold weather
- Be aware of fuel poverty and signpost to support
- Consider a safety check of gas appliances and test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Sweep chimneys that burn coal or wood
- Have a cold weather plan in place for cold, snow and ice. This could include amending the timings or locations of activities or meetings, increasing checks on vulnerable people, and risk-assessing staff and volunteers
- Promote, signpost or set up one of Derbyshire's Warm Spaces

Communicable Disease

As people spend more time together indoors then there is an increase in infectious diseases, particularly respiratory diseases. This can be very serious for some people and result in hospitalisation or death. There is also an increase in sickness and diarrhoea or norovirus.

Winter brings an increased risk of respiratory infections. Flu, COVID-19 and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) vaccinations are available for eligible groups and remain one of the safest and most effective ways to protect individuals and communities.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that can cause serious lung infections, particularly in older adults and very young babies. Although the vaccination is offered all year round we see more cases of RSV in the winter. The RSV vaccination is available for pregnant women, adults aged 75 years and over, adults in an older adult care home and some adults aged 65yrs-74yrs.

Actions that can be taken:

- Encourage eligible people to take up vaccinations through their GP, pharmacist or school vaccination team
- Signpost people to trusted sources of information such as healthcare professionals and the NHS website
- Practice and encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it” [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it Poster - Infection Prevention Control](#) [Catch It Kill It Bin It KS2 Display Poster](#)
- Make sure people are aware not to come to work, voluntary positions or to meet others if ill, particularly for 48 hours after the last episode of sickness and diarrhoea (even if they feel well)
- If working with children/young people use the e-bug resources to talk about the importance of keeping well over winter [e-bug](#)
- Ventilation is important – it is important to allow fresh air in and stale air out (provided it is safe to do so and the indoor temperature does not drop too cold)

Flooding, Storms and Snow

Flooding, storms and snow can disrupt services and pose risks to physical and mental health. There may be a risk that there are power outages. People who live alone, have health conditions including poor mental health or live in rural areas may be particularly affected.

Being aware of the risks and preparing for them can help people cope better in the event of an emergency.

Actions that can be taken:

- Sign up to relevant alerts – those for flood, Met Office and the UK emergency alerts
- Sign up to the Priority Services Register if eligible and encourage others to do the same. This lets utility companies know you need additional support if there is an interruption in service. <http://thepsr.co.uk/>
- Share and use the Prepare website to help develop a plan for yourself and your family [Prepare - Prepare](#)
- Check in regularly on friends, family and neighbours, particularly those who may be vulnerable or living alone.
- Organisations and community groups should use the guidance here to look at their plans for adverse weather or power outages [Information for communities and community groups - Prepare](#)
- Look to have an emergency kit of items at home – advice on what to include is here: [Get prepared for emergencies - Prepare](#) but could include a torch and spare batteries (don't use candles), a first aid kit, battery or wind up radio, and some ready to eat food
- Community and Voluntary groups should think about what support they may be able to offer in the event of an emergency