

Hot weather guidance

When working with clients

Here are a few hints and tips that we can use to make sure we support our clients in the best possible way during hot weather. In addition to following each person's existing care plan and risk assessments, please ensure this guidance is followed:

Home

Check clients' homes have **adequate ventilation** but also have regard to the security of their premises – be careful about letting in air that is already hotter than the indoor temperature. We could, for example, open windows on the shady side of their home where the air is cooler.



Think about reducing the effects of the sun by **pulling curtains with pale linings** etc. in rooms where the sun is likely to be hottest during the day. Beware that using metal blinds and closing dark lined curtains will make things worse.

Be mindful that whilst the daytime weather can be very warm, **nights could sometimes be a bit cool** – make sure clients have enough bedding to pull up at nights should it turn chilly.



Food and drink

Make sure clients have **plenty of fluids** especially cold drinks (avoiding caffeine, alcohol and very sugary drinks), unless they have a health condition which restricts their intake.

Offer **cold food options** (salad, sandwiches, and fruits) as this will help keep people cool.

Do **make a full note** in the client's records about what you have done, e.g. left extra drinks, reminded them to drink plenty etc.



Methods of keeping cool

Some clients may have fans or other methods of keeping cool, but do be careful about **using any electrical appliances in a safe way**.

Fans can help where temperatures are below 35°C but can also cause dehydration – never aim fans directly at people, and always place them at an appropriate distance away. Only use fans when clients can access regular drinks and when there are arrangements to turn them on and off safely.

The Heatwave Plan recommends **leaving a cold flannel** to put on the back of the neck, (or to wipe face and hands), and leaving water to splash on clothes and the skin to keep cool.



Encourage clients to **wear light, loose clothing**. Cotton is coolest. Avoid tight clothing which prevents sweating. Sweating helps us to keep cool.



Effects / health

Watch for any **unusual signs or symptoms** such as headache, cramps, dizziness or excessive drowsiness and get advice from a doctor or by calling 111 straight away.

Heatstroke can kill. Symptoms can include confusion, disorientation, convulsions, and eventually unconsciousness. If you suspect someone has heatstroke dial 999.

Concerns / actions

Report any concerns to your line manager or on call as soon as possible, but don't delay calling the emergency services if it is required.



Risk assessment

Finally, ROMs and supervisors should have already identified any clients who are likely to be at risk if temperatures rise, so ensure there is a **hot weather risk assessment in place**, and ask staff to pay particular attention when visiting these clients.



Looking after yourself

These hints and tips are mainly common sense and what most of us would be doing already. Some of these apply when you are working, and others would also be useful at other times.

Preparation

Check the weather forecast the night before and be prepared.

Have **plenty of cold drinks** with you when you are out.



If you have a condition exacerbated by heat or humidity and might need your medicines during the day when you are out, **remember to take these with you** (e.g. inhalers). Remember hot weather often increases air pollution.

Methods of keeping cool

If the weather is really hot, **look out for the uniform rules being relaxed** during hot weather. Smart casual-wear with an ID badge is agreed if the temperature is predicted to be 25°C or above.

Protect your head and shoulders.

Consider wearing a hat and then take it off when you arrive in the client's home.



A **cold flannel** on the back of the neck, or sprinkling some water on the skin or clothes helps us keep cool when it is very hot.

Opt for **cold foods** and **those containing water**, e.g. fruits and salad, as these cool the body down.

Avoid sitting out in the sun between 11am and 3pm, and when out in the sun (in the car or walking) think about using sunscreen.

Keep any **strenuous outdoor activities for cooler times** of the day.

Did you know...

Trees and leafy plants near windows act as natural air conditioners. Keeping indoor plants watered not only helps cool the environment but Kent Fire Brigade report that a fire started when a dead plant was left on a sunny window ledge and the peat in the pot became so hot it caught fire.

Watering any plants around the building (within local hosepipe restrictions) cools down the immediate outdoor environment.

Local Fire Brigades warn that **leaving glass ornaments or mirrors on window ledges in the sun has already caused some fires** – pass on the information if you think it is relevant to your clients.

Turning off non-essential electrical equipment can reduce the indoor temperature as electrical appliances generate heat.

Cold weather guidance

When working with clients

Here are a few hints and tips that we can use to make sure we support our clients in the best possible way during cold weather. In addition to following each person's existing care plan and risk assessments, please ensure this guidance is followed:

Give clients a leaflet about winter precautions and **getting a flu jab***, and make sure they have an adequate supply of their medicines.



Home

Rooms should **be heated appropriately**. Monitor / be aware of indoor temperatures and report any issues that may put people at risk. (Public Health England recommend a minimum of 18°C) to reduce the risk of cold-related illness and death in the most vulnerable people.



Report any heating issues in a client's home to your line manager or on call immediately so they can be sorted out, for example by contacting the next of kin / housing provider etc.

If a client is at risk and does not have their own thermometer, use the **Public Health England cardboard thermometer***.

*You can get these from your local office.

Draw curtains at dusk to keep any heat generated inside the room.



Food and drink

Food is a vital source of energy and helps keep the body warm. Ensure good food intake and encourage hot food and beverages.



Make sure your clients have a **good supply of food and drinks** in case you are unable to get to them the next day.

Methods of keeping warm

Clients should be encouraged to **wear good-fitting slippers** with a good grip indoors and shoes with a good grip outside to prevent trips, slips and falls.



Ensure clients are **dressed in suitable clothing**. People should **wear lots of layers** of clothing to stay warm. Clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and help maintain body heat.

Effects / health

According to Public Health England **cold weather increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, lung illnesses, flu and other diseases**.

People slip and fall in the snow or ice, sometimes suffering serious injuries. Some groups, such as older people, very young children, and people with serious medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of cold weather.



Concerns / actions

Report any concerns to your line manager or on call as soon as possible, but don't delay calling the emergency services if it is required.

Risk assessment

Finally, ROMs and supervisors should have already identified any clients who are likely to be at risk if temperatures fall, so ensure there is a **cold weather risk assessment in place**, and ask staff to pay particular attention when visiting these clients.

Looking after yourself

These hints and tips are mainly common sense and what most of us would be doing already. Some of these apply when you are working, and others would also be useful at other times.

Preparation

Check the weather forecast the night before and be prepared.

Ensure you are **dressed appropriately**, with the right footwear.



Public Health England recommend that we are **prepared for bad weather** by carrying an ice scraper, de-icer, a shovel, a blanket, water and a flask of something hot in the car when going out.

Make sure your **mobile phone is fully charged** before you go out.

Make sure **your car is fit to go out in severe weather conditions**, by checking tyre pressure and wind screen wash etc.

Get your free flu jab – speak to your pharmacist or GP.

If you have a **condition exacerbated by cold weather** and might need your medicines during the day when you are out, remember to take these with you (e.g. inhalers).

Methods of keeping warm

In the same way that Public Health England advise clients to wear layered clothing and suitable footwear, we too should follow this advice in the cold weather. Proper footwear is essential if rain, snow or ice is predicted.

When you're working

Make sure you are carrying your **screech alarm and torch**.

Listen to your local radio for traffic news and updates on the weather.

Report any slips or falls to your line manager / on call.

If you have to change your calls around please contact your line manager or on-call beforehand, so we can ring and inform clients about time changes, and make a note for the call monitoring staff.



Report to your line manager or on call when you are out in snow / icy weather and let your next of kin know where you will be and what time you expect to be home.

Did you know...

On average, there are around 25,000 excess winter deaths each year in England. There is strong evidence that some of these winter deaths are indeed 'extra' and are related to cold temperatures and living in cold homes as well as infectious diseases such as influenza.