

## **Kent County Council Cold weather warning - Kent urged to keep warm and well**

With cold and wintry weather predicted over the next few days and Covid-19 social distancing restrictions in place, families across Kent are being urged to follow a few simple measures to keep their loved ones safe and healthy.

A level two cold weather alert has been announced for Kent by the Met Office which triggers actions in the NHS, public health, social care and other community organisations, to support vulnerable people who have health issues that increase their risk of harm.

There is a 60% probability of severe cold weather in Southeast England until Thursday 10 December.

Prolonged cold weather can be a risk for anyone although vulnerable people, including the elderly and those with long-term medical conditions, are particularly at risk which creates further health concerns this winter season as Covid-19 cases are still prevalent in the community and those in vulnerable groups can be most at risk of severe symptoms

KCC Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care, Clair Bell said: "With severe winter weather, there always comes the warning and appeal to residents to help the most vulnerable members of their community - we appreciate that most people will be able to look after themselves but some need more support to prepare.

"This year especially, we want to ease the burden on the NHS and keep people safe at home. Basic advice can help them to do that - such as being ready to stay indoors, making sure there is enough food and medicine at home and ordering repeat prescriptions in plenty of time. Having a family member, friend or neighbour who can help out can be vital in cold weather – helping with anything from putting the bin out to collecting a prescription or doing some grocery shopping."

She adds: "Just remember to follow social distancing guidelines, good regular handwashing techniques and wear a mask. Then you'll be ready to rally round, to take time to care for yourself, your family and others. Please help to protect Kent."

Simple tips such as making regular hot drinks and wearing several thin layers of clothes rather than one thick one can help to keep your body warm.

KCC Director for Public Health Andrew Scott-Clark added: "Exposure to the cold increases the risk of strokes and heart attacks - even a short time in the cold, outdoors or indoors, can have a lasting effect. People should wrap up warm to protect themselves and help those who may have difficulty following the basic advice."

At home:

- Regular hot meals and drinks can help keep your body warm.
- Keep your home heated – set the heating to the right temperature (18-21C).

- If trying to save fuel, it is advisable to heat the living room during the day, the bathroom when needed and the bedroom, just before going to bed.
- Get the flu vaccine to protect yourself and others. This is free for anyone over 65, pregnant women, those with long term conditions, and children aged two to four. Details are available at GP surgeries or pharmacies and the vaccine is free for some people.
- Order repeat prescriptions in good time to make sure you have enough supply of any medicines you use.
- Have your heating and cooking appliances checked regularly and make sure the chimney has been swept recently.

If you need to go out:

- Wear shoes with slip resistant, good grip soles.
- Make sure you are not caught out by snow and ice; stay tuned to the weather forecast and plan ahead with food supplies.
- Get up-to-date traffic information at [www.kenttraffic.info](http://www.kenttraffic.info)
- In periods of severe weather such as snow and ice, do not travel unless necessary.
- People are urged not to go to A&E or call 999 unless it's an emergency. If you are in any doubt, NHS111 can help you get the right treatment.

More information is available about how to keep yourself and others safe during cold weather through [www.kent.gov.uk/winterhealth](http://www.kent.gov.uk/winterhealth) You can find information on Covid-19 including details on the NHS Test and Trace app, symptoms and getting a test at [www.kent.gov.uk/kentprotect](http://www.kent.gov.uk/kentprotect)