

REPORT TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Barnsley Collaborative Cold Weather Plan

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the Barnsley's 2023/24 plan to reduce cold-related harm and winter mortality.
- 1.2 To seek Health & Wellbeing Board endorsement for the next phase of delivery, aligned to the UKHSA Adverse Weather & Health Plan

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to:-
 - Note the content of 2023-2024 plan and recognise the work delivered to date to address winter mortality and cold related ill health in Barnsley
 - Raise awareness of current guidance and support locally to address cold related ill health this winter and beyond
 - Support a review of the plan going forward into 2024, aligned to the UKHSA Adverse Weather & Health Plan.

3. Delivering the [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

- 3.1 The 2023/24 Cold Weather Plan outlines our strategic objectives to reduce cold-related harm and winter mortality. It has been produced collaboratively with partners and aligned to the [Barnsley 2030](#) outcomes, Barnsley Place-Based Partnership's [Tackling Health Inequalities in Barnsley](#) and the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#).
- 3.2 Reducing cold-related harm in our communities is a complex issue. For this plan to be successful, keeping warm and well needs to be everyone's priority over the colder months.

- 3.3 Working with key partners, the plan emphasises early intervention and prevention to focus our efforts working alongside residents most at risk of their health and wellbeing being affected this winter. This is particularly important for residents to access health and care support during winter when there is higher demand.
- 3.4 This year's plan will contribute to tackling the cost-of-living crisis residents face, driven by the rising energy cost.
- 3.5 The plan has been co-produced with Collaborative Cold Weather Planning Group members. This group has the responsibility of coordinating local action in advance of the winter to:
- Reduce cold-related morbidity and mortality in Barnsley.
 - Reduce Barnsley's winter mortality rates.
 - Contribute to Barnsley's response to COVID-19 and flu.
 - Contribute to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis

4. Reducing Inequalities

4.1 Winter mortality represents an important health inequality, and those in greater socioeconomic deprivation are more likely to be affected. There are several wider and interlinked factors that contribute to winter mortality and cold-related harm. These are predictable and preventable, and include:

- Housing and economic factors (household income, cost of fuel and energy efficiency of the home)
- Seasonal factors (including temperature, physical hazards e.g. snow and ice)
- Circulating infectious diseases (particularly flu and COVID-19)
- Individual vulnerability to health effects of cold
- Attitudes to cold and associated behaviours

- 4.2 Every contact counts for all front-line workers who support residents in our communities, particularly those people who are vulnerable to the cold. These include:
 - older people aged over 65 years old
 - people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke or TIA, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or diabetes
 - people with mental ill-health that reduces individual's ability to self-care (including dementia)
 - pregnant women (in view of potential impact of heat and cold on risk of preterm birth)
 - children under the age of five
 - people with learning difficulties
 - people assessed as being at risk of, or having had, recurrent falls

- people who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves
- people who are housebound or otherwise low mobility
- people living in deprived circumstances
- people living in houses with mould
- people who are fuel poor
- people experiencing homelessness or people sleeping rough
- other marginalised or socially isolated individuals or groups

5. **Barnsley Cold Weather Plan 2023/24**

5.1 Our vision: A Barnsley where everyone is supported to stay warm and well this winter.

5.2 Our aim: to tackle winter mortality and cold-related harm, in line with the National [Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#) and reduce the overall winter mortality rate in the borough, now known as the 'Winter Mortality Index' (WMI). The purpose of the WMI is to compare the number of deaths that occur in the winter period with the average of the non-winter periods. Winter mortality is not solely a reflection of temperature but of other factors as well. These include respiratory diseases and pressure on services, which have been more intense than usual during and following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WMI is an important measure as it allows us to assess whether our local cold weather plan is having an impact on mortality risks during the winter period.

5.3 Barnsley's most recent Winter Mortality Index (WMI) of 17.7% is significantly lower than the national average (36.2%). However, the time period for this data (August 2020 to July 2021) includes the winter of 2020. In 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to a large increase in deaths, mainly in the non-winter months of April to July, impacting the WMI for this period. The scale of COVID-19 deaths during non-winter months means the data is skewed and should be interpreted with caution.

5.4 The WMI is also partly dependent on the proportion of older people in the population, as most winter deaths affect older people (there is no standardisation in this calculation by age or any other factor). Barnsley's ageing population will likely impact our WMI, with 20% of our resident population aged 65 or over.

There are plans for further local analysis of winter mortality data to include data beyond the time period of COVID-19 being the leading cause of death.

5.6 The Barnsley Cold Weather Plan outlines several priorities, with key collaborative actions listed under each section:

- Falls and frailty
- Health conditions made worse by the cold
- Housing
- Seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccination uptake amongst priority groups
- Marketing and communication.

Further details can be found in the online plan:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/our-council/our-strategies/barnsley-cold-weather-plan-202223/>

6. Keeping Warm & Well

- 6.1 We will co-ordinate and co-produce a marketing and communications campaign to empower residents to self-care and stay warm and well throughout winter.
- 6.2 Our plan offers help and resources for groups, residents, and those who look after them. It encourages people to take care of themselves and find the help they need to stay healthy during the colder months. Including accessing resources from More Money In Your Pocket.
- 6.3 Key actions include:
- Collaborative communication plan using marketing mix that reaches the target audience
 - Keeping warm and well resources for Barnsley residents
 - Workforce development and toolkit training resources
 - Promoting key community events, including Fuel Poverty Awareness Day and Area Council events

7. Proposed next steps

- Continue to build on the learning from our collaborative approach to address the impacts of cold weather on Barnsley residents.
- Deliver the agreed actions set out in the Cold Weather Plan 2023- 24
- Develop an overarching Adverse Weather and Health Plan in 2024 to align with the UKHSA national guidance and consolidate existing plans, including heatwave and cold weather plans.

9. Appendices

9.1 Barnsley Cold Weather Plan 2023-24 –

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/our-council/our-strategies/barnsleys-cold-weather-plan>

9.2 Keeping Warm & Well leaflet –

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/ewrow5lt/stay-well-this-winter-leaflet-2023-to-2024.pdf>

9.3 National Adverse Weather and Health Plan

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adverse-weather-and-health-plan>

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