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THIS POLICY IS FOR:	Staff including Agency Workers (temporary workers), Commissioners and Service Users

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

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ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ensure that during adverse winter weather, Nursing Direct:
 - Maintains a safe and healthy environment for all Service Users
 - Minimises the disruption caused by adverse weather to the service.
 - Responds efficiently to any changes in the Service User's health.
- 1.2 To ensure that Staff including Agency Workers understand what their responsibilities are during bad weather (adverse weather) and that the managers understand what procedures must be in place so that services can continue with minimal interruption.
- 1.3 To support Nursing Direct in meeting the Key Lines of Enquiry/Quality Statements as set out by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 1.4 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that Nursing Direct is registered to provide:
 - The Care Act 2014
 - Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009
 - Civil Contingencies Act 2004
 - Equality Act 2010
 - The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The following roles may be affected by this policy:
 - All Staff including Agency Workers
- 2.2 The following Service Users may be affected by this policy:
 - Service Users
- 2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:
 - Family
 - Advocates
 - Representatives
 - Commissioners
 - External health professionals
 - Local Authority
 - NHS

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To ensure that business continuity plans consider the impact of adverse weather on staff including Agency Workers and Service Users and for services to respond effectively in the event of adverse weather.
- 3.2 To ensure that the Nursing Direct considers the impact of adverse weather on Staff including Agency Workers and Service Users, and for services to respond effectively in the event of adverse weather.
- 3.3 To ensure that unnecessary hospital admissions and delayed hospital discharges are prevented.
- 3.4 To ensure that Nursing Direct supports Staff including Agency Workers and Service Users to reduce the risk of injury (such as slips, trips and falls) and illness caused by adverse weather.

4. POLICY

- 4.1 Nursing Direct recognises that it has a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of its' staff including Agency Workers at work. Nursing Direct also understands the importance of the need to safely deliver care and support, including during adverse weather conditions. Nursing Direct expect, however, that its' Staff including Agency Workers will make every effort to attend work during adverse weather conditions without putting their personal safety at risk.
- 4.2 This policy aims to ensure that equal and fair treatment is applied, as far as possible, to Nursing Direct Staff including Agency Workers who are unable to attend work, or who have to work a shorter day than normal due to inclement weather.
- 4.3 It is recognised that adverse weather may also impact on Staff including Agency Workers who themselves may have been able to get work but who may need to take urgent carers' leave because of the weather-related closure of other organisations such as schools and nurseries leading to closures or the unavailability of childcare, staff including Agency Workers may have a right to reasonable time off without pay to care for a dependent. In these circumstances, the Parental Leave Policy and Procedure may apply.
- 4.4 The decisions to be made in the event of severe inclement weather will be a balance between the following:
 - Ensuring that Service User care or service delivery is not compromised.
 - Ensuring that the safety of Staff including Agency Workers at work is not compromised.

- 4.5 Nursing Direct will identify Service Users who may be vulnerable and who need additional support during adverse weather.
- 4.6 Nursing Direct has clear continuity plans in place and will work closely with local partners, including Local Authorities, CCGs, and other service users, to ensure that continuity of care is maintained and that both Service Users and staff including Agency Workers remain safe. The Registered Manager will put mechanisms in place to identify Service Users who may be vulnerable and who need additional support during adverse weather.
- 4.7 Nursing Direct will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by auditing unplanned absences during periods of adverse weather. To ensure the safety of Service Users during adverse weather conditions, Nursing Direct will ensure that staff including Agency Workers have read and understood the Adverse Weather Conditions Policy and Procedure.
- 4.8 Nursing Direct will maintain an awareness of possible adverse weather conditions by using trusted information sources, such as the Meteorological Office (Met Office), the Cold Weather Alert Service, local media and local radio stations, and other local sources as appropriate.

On receiving information from any source that severe weather conditions may be imminent or forecast, Nursing Direct will put in place procedures for monitoring and cascading weather alerts to staff in a timely manner and the Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service will be accessed to determine the threat level. In doing so, Nursing Direct will ensure that any communications comply with the Data Protection Act and UK GDPR.

- 4.9 Furthermore, when vehicles, wheelchairs, or other similar transportation methods are required for staff, including Agency Workers (whether owned by Nursing Direct or the service user), Nursing Direct will request copies of service records to ensure that they are serviced and confirmed to be safe for winter use.
- 4.10 **The National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS)**
Nursing Direct will keep up to date with weather alerts to ensure that the business continuity plans are in place. This will be done by following updates from local radio and social media sources as well as from the Meteorological Office (Met Office)

Nursing Direct will refer to the Adverse Weather and Health Plan: cold weather advice on the **GOV.UK** website for guidelines around expectations, dependent on the level of severity of the weather warning.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Winter Preparedness

- Nursing Direct will stay informed about weather alerts to ensure robust business continuity plans are in place. These plans will specifically address weather-related disruptions, including their potential impact on continuity of care. If adverse weather affects transport infrastructure and prevents staff, including Agency Workers, from traveling as usual, the plan will outline clear solutions to mitigate these challenges.
- Updates will be monitored through updates from local radio and social media sources as well as from the Meteorological Office (Met Office).
- Nursing Direct will discuss with staff including Agency Workers, about their transport arrangements and review how they will get to work.
- As part of winter preparedness, Nursing Direct will put in place procedures for monitoring and cascading weather alerts to Staff including Agency Workers in a timely manner.

5.2 Response During Adverse Weather

- Nursing Direct will conduct dynamic risk assessments during cold weather conditions to identify and address triggering factors affecting service users most at risk. These assessments will ensure that service delivery continues with minimal disruption to meet the basic care needs outlined in individual care plans. At the same time, the safety of staff including Agency Workers will be prioritised, considering risks such as slips, trips, falls, and driving hazards. Appropriate interventions and instructions will be implemented to mitigate these risks and ensure safe and effective care delivery.
- Nursing Direct will review capacity as well as the need for, and the availability of, staff including Agency Workers, especially if the weather is forecast to last for a prolonged period to ensure continuity of care for all Service Users.
- Nursing Direct will liaise with local partners including Local Authorities, ICB's/ CCGs, and other services to maximise resources.
- Nursing Direct will liaise with staff including Agency Workers, service users, their next of kin or their families to ensure that access to the working environment is safe. The building will need to be accessible and safe whatever the adverse weather conditions. This may mean that Nursing Direct must plan for severe weather conditions by recommending the service user to have equipment and resources in place which may include salt etc. or additional heating or lighting to manage severe weather.
- Nursing Direct will adopt the Cold Weather Plan for England (Public Health England), Met Office Warnings and advice, NICE guideline [NG6] and Age UK "Staying well this winter" as guidance documents when planning for contingency support during adverse weather conditions.
- Nursing Direct as a care provider is aware that they are duty bound to respond to severe weather, for example, Rota cover, maintaining a safe environment and making necessary arrangements with appropriate precautions.

5.3 Staff including Agency Worker Responsibilities

- It is expected that staff including Agency Workers will make every reasonable effort to reach their place of work and Staff including Agency Workers must have explored all reasonable and alternative methods of travel. However, Staff including Agency Workers are not expected to, and should not, put themselves or others at risk.
- Staff including Agency Workers must ensure that they wear suitable footwear to minimise the risk of slips, trips and falls. They will wear shoes with good grips, avoid taking shortcuts across wet grass or slippery paths and, wherever possible, remain on the main path to minimise the risk of slips, trips and falls
- Staff including Agency Workers, who live in areas where they have had difficulties in getting to work during periods of adverse weather should be prepared to make appropriate arrangements in relation to attendance at work. Staff, including Agency Workers, should plan and consider that their usual route may be disrupted by bad weather and must plan their route in advance, allowing longer for their journey than usual.
- If Staff including Agency Workers anticipate travel problems or are unable to reach their place of work, then they must telephone Nursing Direct management as soon as possible to explain their circumstances. If management is unavailable, an alternative 'senior' member of the team within the office must be contacted. This must be done as soon as possible to ensure minimal disruption to Service Users.
- Staff including Agency Workers must be aware of their duty of care towards Service Users, colleagues, and other stakeholders in relation to severe weather. Especially because most of their service users are more susceptible to poor health outcomes during adverse weather conditions and to ensure that they follow the plans in order to support them effectively.
- Staff including Agency Workers must consider their health needs and contact their GP to discuss access to the annual vaccination programmes, such as flu and COVID-19 where eligible.

Supporting Service Users to Remain Safe and Well During Adverse Weather

Nursing Direct will support Service Users to remain safe and well and will consider, where possible, the following procedures when delivering services:

- 5.4 **Diet and Nutrition**
- Ensure that the Service User has access to regular hot drinks and eats at least one hot meal a day, if possible.
 - Nursing Direct will ensure that nutrition and hydration are incorporated into the Care Plan and regularly reviewed to meet the Service User's needs, especially during adverse weather conditions.
- 5.5 **Activity and Excursions**
- Where possible and safe to do so, support the Service User to keep as active as possible.
 - If the Service User plans to go out, then this will be risk assessed, and appropriate measures will be placed in place to reduce the risk and raise the awareness of the Service User about the hazards of the adverse weather.
- 5.6 **Temperature Considerations**
- Staff including Agency Workers will support the Service User to choose appropriate clothes for the weather, for example, encourage them to wear several light layers of warm clothes (rather than one chunky layer)
 - Frail or ill Service Users may require a higher ambient temperature than normal to maintain functions and, therefore, staff including Agency Workers must consider each Service User and their needs separately.
 - Staff including Agency Workers will be aware that their view of the temperature may be different from the Service User. As staff, including Agency Workers are more active while working, they may feel warmer and be less sensitive to changes in temperature.
- 5.7 **Hot Water Bottle Use**
- 5.7.1 Hot water bottles are generally unnecessary if room temperature is properly regulated, but some Service Users may prefer them.
- 5.7.2 If a Service User lacks the capacity to use one safely, a risk assessment must be conducted.
- 5.7.3 Hot water bottles should be regularly replaced, ideally every winter or every two years, depending on use and storage.
- 5.7.4 Staff, including Agency Workers, must inspect bottles for damage, using cold water to check for leaks. A protective cover must always be used, and bottles should be filled safely to prevent scalding.
- 5.7.5 Water should be mixed to a tolerable temperature before sealing the bottle, and Service Users should confirm comfort before staff leave.
- 5.8 **Using Wheat Bags or Heat Packs Safely**
- 5.8.1 Microwavable wheat bags or heat packs provide comfort but pose fire and safety risks if misused. Staff, including Agency Workers, must not place them under blankets or bedding, must follow heating instructions carefully, and should dispose of any bag that smells burnt.
- 5.8.2 Heat tolerance varies, so staff including Agency Workers must test the temperature before use, ensuring it is warm but not burning.
- 5.8.3 When heating a wheat bag for a Service User, their temperature preference should be considered.
- 5.8.4 For Service Users with limited capacity or cognition, a risk assessment by Nursing Direct is required before use.
- 5.9 **Recommended Indoor Temperatures for Homes in Winter**
- Heating homes to at least 18°C (65F) in winter poses minimal risk to the health of a sedentary person, wearing suitable clothing.
- 5.10 **Promotion of Health**
- All Staff including Agency Workers will be aware of monitoring for early signs of winter illnesses and respond in a timely manner.
- 5.11 **Capacity and Consent**
- Where a Service User lacks capacity or anyone to advocate on their behalf, the Registered Manager will consider a best interest decision to ensure their safety and wellbeing in line with the Mental Capacity Act
- 5.12 **Continuity Planning**
- The Registered Manager of Nursing Direct will ensure that continuity plans:
- Include how disruption to the service will be minimised in the event of adverse weather. This must include considering deliveries such as medicines, food and essential items
 - Detail how large-scale communications to family members and other stakeholders will be delivered in the event of adverse weather
 - Consider how coordination between partnerships and other agencies will work and support not only Nursing Direct, but other local parties

6. DEFINITIONS

- 6.1 **Staff including Agency Workers**
- 6.1.1 **Staff**
Denotes the employees of Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited.
- 6.1.2 **Agency Workers**
Refers to individuals who are contracted with Nursdoc Limited or another employment business as an Agency Worker (temporary worker) provided to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited to perform care services under the direction of Nursing Direct.
- 6.2 **Nursing Direct**
Nursing Direct, also known as Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, is the entity regulated by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and responsible for the care service provision, contracted to provide homecare services to service users in their homes, in placements, essential healthcare facilities and in the community.
- 6.3 **Nursdoc Limited**
As the sister company to Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited, Nursdoc Limited acts as an employment business, specialising in providing staffing solutions to the healthcare sector.
- 6.4 **CQC (Care Quality Commission)**
CQC throughout this policy, the term "CQC" refers to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the independent regulator of health and social care in England.
- 6.5 **Adverse Weather**
Adverse weather is unfavourable or potentially harmful weather. In the context of this policy, it means snow, ice, winds, storms, floods, or any other impending severe weather extreme.
- 6.6 **Meteorological Office**
The Meteorological Office provides weather and climate services:


- It is part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
- It is recognised as one of the world's most accurate forecasters, using more than 10 million weather observations a day

6.7 **Business Continuity**

Business continuity encompasses planning and preparation to ensure that an organisation can continue to operate in the event of serious incidents or disasters and is able to recover to an operational state within a reasonably short period

6.8 **Frailty**

Frailty is related to the ageing process, that is, simply getting older. It describes how bodies gradually lose their in-built reserves, leaving people vulnerable to dramatic, sudden changes in health, triggered by seemingly small events such as a minor infection or a change in medication or environment. In medicine, frailty defines the group of older people who are at highest risk of adverse outcomes such as falls, disability, admission to hospital, or the need for long-term care.

COMPLETED DATE:	
SIGN OFF DATE:	
REVIEW DATE:	
SIGNED:	 Marc Stiff