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## ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS AND SUPPORTING SERVICE USERS DURING ADVERSE WEATHER

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# ADVERSE WEATHER AND SUPPORTING SERVICE USERS DURING ADVERSE WEATHER 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 Nursing Direct 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 / Next of Kin
  - Advocates
  - Representatives
  - Commissioners
  - External health professionals
  - Local Authority
  - NHS / ICB

## 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 Service Users and responds effectively in the event of adverse weather.
- 3.3 To ensure that unnecessary hospital admissions and delayed hospital discharges are prevented. To ensure that Nursing Direct supports the Service User 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. While accepting that staff, including Agency Workers, should not take unreasonable risks in attempting to get to work in difficult conditions, there will not be a disincentive to staff including Agency Workers who do try. The decisions to be made in the event of severe inclement weather will be a balance between the following:
- Ensuring that the Service User care or service delivery is not compromised
  - Ensuring that the safety of staff including agency Workers at work is not compromised
- 4.3 Nursing Direct has clear and robust business continuity plan in place and will work closely with local partners, including Local Authorities, ICB's and other service users, to ensure that continuity of care is maintained and that both Service Users and staff, including Agency Workers will remain safe.
- 4.4 The Registered Manager will ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify Service Users who may be vulnerable and who need additional support during adverse weather.
- 4.5 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 including Agency Workers in a timely manner and the Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service will be accessed to determine the threat level.
- 4.6 Nursing Direct will ensure that all staff, including Agency Workers, have access to the Unable to Attend the Workplace policy and procedure. Nursing Direct will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by auditing unplanned absences.
- 4.7 To ensure the safety of Service Users during adverse weather, Nursing Direct will ensure that staff including Agency Workers have read and understood this policy and procedure.

## 5. PROCEDURE

### 5.1 Winter Preparedness

- Nursing Direct will review and update the business continuity plan for Nursing Direct to ensure that weather-related issues are included within the plan. The impact on continuity of care if the transport infrastructure is affected and staff, including Agency Workers, who are unable to travel in their usual way, must be included with solution to overcome any transport issues documented clearly.
- Nursing Direct will discuss with staff, including Agency Workers, their transport arrangements and review how they will get to work.

- 5.2 During adverse weather, Nursing Direct will keep up to date with weather alerts to ensure robust business continuity plans are in place. Information can be accessed via [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk), the Cold-Heat Alerts and local radio stations.

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

As part of winter preparation, Nursing Direct will put in place procedures for monitoring and cascading weather alerts to staff including Agency Workers in a timely manner. Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited will ensure that any communications comply with the Data Protection Act and UK GDPR.

- 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.

### 5.3 Response During Adverse Weather

- Ensure that dynamic risk assessments are undertaken as the weather situation develops to ensure the safety of staff, including Agency Workers. Factors to consider will include the risks of slips, trips and falls as well as driving safety.
- 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.
- Liaise with local partners including Local Authorities, ICB's and other service users to maximise resources.
- Ensure that access to service users' homes can be maintained safely, as far as reasonably practicable, during adverse weather conditions. Planning should focus on supporting the safe delivery of care in people's own homes, including considering any equipment, resources, or local arrangements that may be needed to manage severe weather, such as gritting materials, safe access routes, lighting, heating, or other practical measures to reduce risk and maintain continuity of care.

### 5.4 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, 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 living within reasonable walking distance will be expected to make every effort to get to work on foot, where it is possible and safe for them to do so
- 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 prove they have made all possible efforts to get to work, i.e. that a genuine attempt was made. In this respect, it would not be enough for them to claim that just their normal method of travel was unavailable. Staff including Agency Workers would be expected to have explored all reasonable alternatives.
- Staff, including Agency Workers, are reminded of their duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions. This includes taking extra care when travelling to and from work and accessing the home.
- Staff including Agency Workers must consider their health needs and contact their GP to discuss access to the annual vaccination programmes, such as flu where eligible.
- 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.
- 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.

## 5.5 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:

### 5.5.1 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.
- Ensure that nutrition and hydration are incorporated into the Care Plan and that they are reviewed, where appropriate, to ensure that the Service User has plenty of hot food and drinks in line with their agreed plan and dietary needs. Food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep the body warm.
- Staff including Agency Workers will refer to the suite of nutrition and hydrations policies and procedures.

### 5.5.2 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 measures put in place to reduce the risk and raise the awareness of the Service User about the hazards of the adverse weather.

### 5.5.3 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.

### 5.5.4 Hot Water Bottle Use

- Hot water bottles should not be necessary when the room temperature is regulated to suit individual needs and there is an ambient temperature.
- However, it is acknowledged that some Service Users may choose to have a hot water bottle as part of their routine.
- Hot water bottles will not be used when the Service User lacks the capacity and cognition to safely use a hot water bottle, and Nursing Direct must complete a risk assessment.
- Rubber products perish. Therefore, the Service User will need to replace the bottle regularly (each winter or every second year, depending on how much it is used and how well it is stored).
- Staff, including Agency Workers, must inspect the hot water bottle carefully. If there are any signs of leaks or cracks, if it is damaged or brittle, it must not be used. A simple way to check for leaks is to put cold water in the bottle first.
- If a hot water bottle is being used, it will be covered by a protective cover over the bare rubber inner and filled in a manner which is safe and eliminates the risk of scalding in the event of failure of the bottle.
- Mix water in a jug to the highest temperature which it is possible to bear on bare skin. Pour that water into the bottle and seal, press the bottle and check the stopper for leakage.
- When placing the bottle against the Service User, wait long enough for the Service User to report that the temperature and position are comfortable before leaving

### 5.5.5 Using Wheat Bags or Heat Packs Safely

Microwavable wheat bags or heat packs are comforting. However, they come with a couple of safety warnings.

Wheat bags can be a fire hazard if used incorrectly. They have been linked to fires when placed under bedding and can catch fire in the microwave if heated for too long.

- Staff including Agency Workers must not use wheat bags in confined spaces that can trap heat, such as underblankets or on bedding
- Wheat bags must come with clear heating instructions. Always follow the heating instructions and be careful when re-heating the bag
- If the wheat bag starts to smell burnt or charred, or if staff including Agency Workers notice this smell when heating it, let it cool down in the kitchen sink before disposal

- Everyone has a different tolerance level to heat. Therefore, skin sensitivity should be taken into account when using a wheat bag, but it should feel comfortable and warm without burning.
- Staff, including Agency Workers, must always test the temperature before applying it to the body and when heating a wheat bag for the Service User, must consider that the temperature they prefer may differ from what the Service User likes
- Caution should be taken when Service Users lack the capacity and cognition to safely use a wheat bags or heat packs and staff including must complete a risk assessment

#### 5.5.6 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. Temperatures that are lower than 18°C (65F) in winter may increase blood pressure or cardiovascular disease. High-risk groups include:

- Older people (Over 65's)
- People with learning disabilities or cognitive impairment
- People who are at risk of falls
- People who live alone
- People living in poverty or deprived circumstances

#### 5.5.7 Promotion of Health

- All staff, including Agency Workers, will be aware of monitoring for early signs of winter illnesses and will respond in a timely manner.

#### 5.5.8 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.
- Service Users with dementia may not be aware of the change in temperature and will need support to ensure that they are dressed in appropriate clothes for the weather.
- Staff including Agency Workers will refer to Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 Policy and Procedure for further information.

#### 5.5.9 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) and 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.

## OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

To be "outstanding" in this policy area you could provide evidence that:

- Risk assessments of environmental and person-specific factors at Nursing Direct Healthcare Limited are incorporated into care to manage and mitigate risks in relation to adverse weather
- Communication with other agencies is consistently effective to meet the needs of Service Users and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Service Users during adverse weather
- Care Plans are person-centred and contain significant amounts of information regarding the Service User's history, likes and dislikes
- Care Plans are reviewed regularly and with the involvement of Service Users and their relatives, taking into account external factors such as adverse weather
- Changing needs are identified promptly and staff ensure that these needs are met through the involvement of other agencies

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<b>SIGNED:</b>	 Marc Stiff – Group Managing Director