



City and Hackney Hot Weather and Health: Guidance and Action Cards (2024)

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Introduction

Extreme heat presents a number of [risks to health](#). Extreme hot weather can cause people to become unwell through dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, and is associated with excess deaths. It can also result in [indirect effects](#), such as an increased demand on health and social care services, increased risk for power outages and wildfires.

The summer of 2022 observed record high temperatures across England, with [2.985 estimated all-cause excess deaths](#). Whilst heatwaves are predicted to become more intense and more frequent as a result of climate change, heat-related illness and deaths are preventable with appropriate action.

The national [Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#) aims to support organisations and the public in preparing for and responding to future adverse weather events. The plan is underpinned by a [supporting evidence document](#), guidance and support materials, and the [Weather Health Alerting System](#). The plan covers a broad spectrum of weather-related hazards, including heat, cold and flooding.

Aim and how to use this resource

The aim of this document is to set out the actions to be taken by City and Hackney system-partners when specific [weather health alert levels](#) are reached. The resource is to ensure that interventions to protect vulnerable people and the general public are considered in advance of and during hot weather periods.

Action cards and advice are provided for services, organisations and professionals who interact with those at particularly high risk from the health effects of hot weather including:

- [Health and social care commissioners](#)
- [Health and social care providers](#)
- [Those looking after children and in early years settings](#)
- [Voluntary and community sector](#)
- [Those planning events and mass gatherings](#)
- [Those supporting people that are homeless and sleeping rough](#)
- [Those supporting inclusion health groups](#)

The action cards set out preparedness and response actions that align to three escalating alert levels; Yellow (Response), Amber (Enhanced Response) and Red (Emergency Response). Organisations are encouraged to check the relevant [national guidance](#) for more detail, including the required actions for the Green (Preparedness) impact level, and adapt actions to their service or organisation as appropriate.

This resource is supported by a list of related and interdependent local plans¹ including:

- Hackney's [Incident Plan](#), Identification of Vulnerable Persons Plan, Humanitarian Assistance Plan and Severe Weather Plan;
- The pan-London Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP);
- The City of London Corporation Business Continuity Strategy and Framework.

¹ OFFICIAL documents; available on request.

The impact of extreme hot weather

Extreme heat is increasing worldwide, with an increase of concurrent heatwaves compounding the impacts of other natural hazards, such as drought, wildfire and flash flooding. Climate change is projected to significantly increase population exposure to heatwaves and consequently increase heat-related morbidity and mortality.

A number of population groups are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of hot weather including:

- Those aged 75 years and those living alone, in a care home or with unstable housing
- Children under 4 years and children living with disabilities or complex medical conditions
- Those living with long term conditions including heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, Parkinson’s disease and severe mental illness
- Those on medications that can affect temperature regulation, electrolyte balance or kidney function
- Vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants who may live in low-quality and overcrowded housing, and have limited resources to adapt
- Outdoor workers who may have jobs requiring great physical exertion and those who work in sectors with high exposure to hot weather

Temperatures in [excess of 25°C are associated with excess-related deaths](#), with higher temperatures associated with even greater numbers of excess deaths. Hot weather places a strain on the heart and lungs. For that reason, the majority of serious illnesses and deaths caused by heat are respiratory and cardiovascular, with an increased risk for [heat exhaustion and or heatstroke](#) during periods of hot weather. Overexposure to sun is equally dangerous, with effects ranging from mild sunburn to skin cancer.

Heat exhaustion	Heat stroke
<p>Symptoms of heat exhaustion vary but include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tiredness • dizziness • headache • muscle cramps • feeling or being sick • excessing sweating • intense thirst <p>Actions to cool someone down with heat exhaustion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move them to a cooler place • remove all unnecessary clothing like a jacket or socks • help them drink a sports or rehydration drink or cool water. • apply cool water by spray or sponge to exposed skin; cold packs wrapped in a cloth and put under the armpits or on the neck can also help 	<p>Symptoms of heat stroke may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high body temperature – a temperature of or above 40°C (104°F) is a major sign of heatstroke • red, hot skin and sweating that then suddenly stops • fast heartbeat • fast shallow breathing • confusion/lack of coordination • loss of consciousness • fast breathing or shortness of breath • skin may stop sweating and someone may have seizures (fits) or collapse <p>Heatstroke is a medical emergency. If you are concerned or think someone has heat stroke you should dial 999.</p>

The Weather Health Alerting System

The new [Weather Health Alerting System](#) is provided by the UK Health Security Agency, in partnership with the Met Office. The system is intended to provide early warning when adverse temperatures are likely to impact on the health and wellbeing of the population. It is made up of the Heat-Health Alerts (HHA) and the Cold-Health Alerts (CHA).

The core alerting season for the HHA runs from 1 June to 30 September, whilst the core alerting season for the CHA runs from 1 November to 31 March. The impact based alerts are as follows:

The Weather Health Alerting System Impact Levels	
Green (Preparedness)	No alert will be issued as the conditions are likely to have minimal impact on health; business as usual and summer/winter planning and preparedness activities.
Yellow (Response)	These alerts cover a range of situations. Yellow alerts may be issued during periods of heat/cold which would be unlikely to impact most people but could impact those who are particularly vulnerable
Amber (Enhanced Response)	Weather impacts are likely to be felt across the whole health service, with potential for the whole population to be at risk. Non-health sectors may also start to observe impacts and a more significant coordinated response may be required.
Red (Emergency Response)	Significant risk to life for even the healthy population.

During the HHA season, HHAs will be sent from the Met Office to the Council's Civil Protection / Emergency Planning Team, who in turn, will cascade the alert to lead officers and professionals that support or interface with those at risk, to provide awareness and a reminder that they take action appropriate to the alert in place. HHAs will be cascaded to the following:

- Health and social care services and providers
- Schools and nurseries
- Children's centres
- Communications
- Public Health
- Housing

Services, organisations, professionals and the general public are encouraged to [sign up](#) to the Weather Alert System and be familiar with it.

Hot weather guidance, resources and training

National Planning and Policy

- [National Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#)

Guidance and Action Cards

- [Hot weather and health: guidance and advice](#)
- [Heat-Health Alert action card for the voluntary and community sector](#)
- [Heat-Health Alert action card for commissioners](#)
- [Heat-Health Alert action card for health and social care providers](#)
- [Heat-Health Alert action card for national government](#)
- [Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during hot weather: teachers and other educational professionals](#)
- [Guidance on running events safely](#)
- [Supporting vulnerable people before and during hot weather: people homeless and sleeping rough](#)

Beat The Heat

- [Hot Weather Advice](#)
- [Poster](#)
- [Keep cool at home checklist](#)

Training

- [Hot weather guidance for carers](#)

Cool Spaces

- [Cool spaces](#) are available to support residents in keeping cool during hot days.

ACTION CARDS

Summary of actions for health and social care commissioners	
Yellow (Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure relevant staff members are aware of and understand business continuity plans and/or hot weather plans, including cascading plans to relevant members of staff. • Continue to engage the community and voluntary sector to support communities to help those most at risk. • Work with partners and staff on risk reduction awareness using a variety of methods to maximise dissemination. • Develop and communicate proactive messages aimed at the public, especially to vulnerable groups and the underserved population. • Ensure organisers of large events take account of possible heat risks.
Amber (Enhanced Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoke local business continuity plans and/or hot weather plans, including cascading alerts to relevant members of staff. • Increase advice to health and social care workers working in community, care homes and hospitals. • Increase communication aimed at the public, especially to underserved populations and vulnerable groups. • Issue media alerts about keeping cool. • Support organisations to reduce unnecessary travel. • Review safety of public events. • Mobilise community and voluntary support.
Red (Emergency Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all local emergency response plans and feed into local (and, where appropriate, national) coordination and response)
<p>Check the national action card for commissioners for more detail, including the required actions for preparedness (Green), and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.</p>	

Summary of actions for health and social care providers

Note, this action card is primarily intended for managers working in:

- Social care, care homes and other residential settings, and domiciliary care
- Organisations providing primary or community health services operating from fixed sites such as GP surgeries and hospitals

Yellow (Response)

- Ensure relevant staff members are aware of and understand the business continuity plan and/or hot weather plans.
- Raise awareness about heat illnesses and how to prevent them among staff, patients, clients and carers, for example by sharing [Beat the Heat](#) messages.
- Ensure organisers of large events take account of possible heat risk.

For fixed sites and or services delivering home care:

- Close any external shutters or shades, blinds and curtains on windows that are exposed to direct sunlight during the day.
- Ensure medications are kept below 25°C.
- Check thermometers are installed and working where vulnerable individuals spend substantial time and ensure relevant staff know how to check, record, and follow internal procedures if a cause for concern is identified. Keep occupied rooms or areas below 26°C.
- Identify and prioritise individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. For individuals who cannot be moved to cool areas, or for whom a move might be too disorienting, take actions to cool them down (for example, liquids, cool wipes) and enhance surveillance.
- Consider moving visiting hours to mornings and evenings to reduce afternoon heat.
- Promote hydration among staff, carers and individuals being cared for. You can also plan to adapt menus to cold meals (preferably with a high-water content e.g. salad).
- Check individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses have visitor/phone call arrangements in place. Ask staff to advise clients or patients on how to keep their own homes cool, using the [Beat the Heat: Keep Cool at Home Checklist](#).
- Encourage use of sunscreen (with a sun protection factor of at least 30) and wear lightweight loose-fitting clothing if going outside.

Amber (Enhanced Response)

- Continue Yellow Alert actions.
- Invoke local business continuity and/or hot weather plans.
- Ensure individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses have appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring.
- Assess staffing levels, recognising possible increased care needs of patients or clients during hot weather.

Red (Emergency Response)

- Follow all local emergency response plans and feed into local (and, where appropriate, national) coordination and response).

Check the national action card for [health and social care providers](#) for more detail, including the required actions for preparedness (Green), and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Summary of actions for those looking after children and in early years settings

Yellow (Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raise awareness of heat illnesses and their prevention among staff and parents/caregivers. ● Monitor temperatures inside buildings, especially where people spend most time and aim to keep as cool as possible. ● Review, prioritise and monitor individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. ● Share and emphasise the importance of Beat the Heat messages to parents/caregivers and staff. ● Ensure adequate supply of cold water.
Amber (Enhanced Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue Yellow Alert actions. ● Consider rearranging school start, finish, and play times to avoid teaching during very hot conditions. ● Children should not take part in vigorous physical activity on very hot days. ● Uniform rules should be relaxed. Children should wear loose, light-coloured clothing to help keep cool and sun hats with wide brims to avoid sunburn. ● Apply sunblock or broad-band sunscreens (applied every 2 hours) with high sun protection factors (of at least SPF 30 and ultraviolet A (UVA) rating of 4 or more stars) to protect skin. ● Encourage children playing outdoors to stay in the shade as much as possible. ● Provide children with plenty of water (such as water from a cold tap) and encourage them to drink more than usual. ● Almost close windows when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors – this should help keep the heat out while allowing adequate ventilation. ● Close indoor blinds or curtains, but do not let them block window ventilation. ● Switch off all electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers when not in use – do not leave equipment in ‘standby mode’ as this generates heat.
Red (Emergency Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue Amber Alert actions. ● Actively monitor all children and monitor compliance with actions to keep learning areas as cool as possible and cool rooms or areas below 26°C. ● Follow all local emergency response plans.

Check the [national guidance for those looking after children and those in early years settings](#) for more detail, including the required actions for preparedness (Green), and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Summary of actions for the voluntary and community sector

Yellow (Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirm that staff are aware of contingency plans. ● Share and emphasise the importance of Beat the Heat messages to clients and staff. ● Raise awareness of heat illnesses and their prevention among clients and carers. ● Support the provision of information about health risks from reliable sources – especially to vulnerable groups and underserved populations. ● Operationalise cool rooms or areas (able to be maintained below 26°C). ● Monitor temperatures inside buildings, especially where people spend most time and aim to keep as cool as possible (for example by closing windows during the day and opening windows when it is cooler outside, such as at night). ● Review, prioritise and monitor individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. ● Ensure sufficient cold water and ice are available to minimise risks from dehydration.
Amber (Enhanced Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue Yellow Alert actions. ● Invoke local business continuity and/or hot weather plans. ● Ensure individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses have appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring.
Red (Emergency Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue Amber Alert actions. ● Follow all local emergency response plans. ● Monitor the current situation by checking the weather alerts or local news.

Check the [national action card for voluntary and community sector](#) for more detail, including the required actions for preparedness (Green), and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Advice for those planning events and mass gatherings

Risk:

- Large public events can increase exposure to heat and direct sunlight, and may also make organisational responses more difficult.
- Individual behaviours often change (e.g. people may be reluctant to use the toilet facilities due to the long queues or lose their viewing position and so purposefully reduce fluid intake).
- There is also a risk of increased alcohol or recreational drug consumption that can lead to dehydration and increased body heat.
- Physical activity, such as dancing, can worsen dehydration and increase body temperature.

Key messages:

- Event organisers should ensure that they have plans in place for the safe management of events and mass gatherings, and ensure information on safe behaviours is available for attendees during periods of hot weather.
- You can reduce the impact of hot weather at events by:
 - Providing adequate drinking water throughout the event in line with potable water and food hygiene plans.
 - Having a plan in place to increase shaded areas.
 - Planning activities at times of the day when it is cooler, such as the morning or evening, and advising attendees to stay out of the sun at the hottest time of the day between 11am and 3pm.
 - Ensuring good public communications on how to reduce the risk associated with hot weather during the event (e.g. via digital screens or announcements), and ensuring plans are in place to make changes to the event should there be an extremely hot weather forecast.

Check the [hot weather advice for those planning events and mass gatherings](#) for more detail and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Advice for those supporting people that are homeless and sleeping rough

Risk:

- People sleeping rough are at very high risk of poor health outcomes, or even death, during hot weather because:
 - they are more likely to be [exposed to heat](#), for example, because of sitting or lying in direct sunlight, living in hot informal accommodation such as tents, wearing multiple layers of clothing, and begging or performing other street work likely to take place in dense urban areas.
 - they are likely to be [more vulnerable](#) to the effects of heat due to a number of reasons including increased rates of physical and mental health conditions, poor healthcare access, alcohol and or recreational drug use, malnutrition and low visibility.
 - they may be [less able to take preventative steps](#) for a variety of reasons, especially as a result of social exclusion.

Key messages:

- Consider ways to identify who and where your most vulnerable individuals are and how you can help them.
- Consider improving or developing a severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) with local partners, for emergency response during extreme hot weather.
- Identify those most at risk using the [risk factors](#) above and consider creating a risk register.
- Have individualised care plans in place where possible, involving the relevant local services.
- Engage with individuals with lived experience to understand local context and where vulnerable individuals are likely to go during hot weather.
- Know which buildings, rooms or services, such as outreach vehicles or locations are at risk of overheating and know how to cool them. Suggestions on [how to make buildings cooler](#) can be found within the [beat the heat guidance](#).
- [Cool spaces](#) are available to support residents in keeping cool during hot days.
- Prioritise available cool spaces for those most at risk, and incentivise the use of cool spaces, for example, by offering activities, entertainment, food, drinks and safe storage of belongings and accessibility for pets. Permanent services are more likely to be used than those that are stood up and down quickly, such as an established shelter.
- Adjust provisions of some services to provide extra daytime protection, for example, extending opening hours of night-only hostels.

Check the [hot weather advice for those supporting people homeless and sleeping rough](#) for more detail and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Advice for those supporting inclusion health groups

Evidence on adverse weather risks for [inclusion health groups](#) is limited, however, this section provides an overview of current understanding for those groups where evidence is documented:

- **People in contact with the criminal justice system and those in detention facilities:** poor ventilation, lack of control over the physical environment and inadequate resources to adapt can amplify the impact of heat on health.
- **Vulnerable migrant populations** (such as asylum seekers and refugees, undocumented migrants and low-paid migrant workers): migrant workers are [overrepresented](#) in hospitality, transport and storage sectors, and may be at greater risk of exposure to hot weather. Vulnerable migrant populations are more likely to live in [low quality and overcrowded privately rented homes](#) and may have limited capability to adapt to the effects of heat.
- **People sleeping rough:** are at greater risk of exposure to heat and are likely to experience disproportionate impacts of extreme heat.
- **Outdoor and indoor workers:** may have job tasks that require great physical exertion and the use of personal protective clothing and equipment may trap heat and prevent cooling. Workers in urban environments are also at risk of increased temperatures during the day due to the urban heat island effect.
- Overall, the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities means that those belonging to inclusion health groups may be at significant risk of harm from extreme temperature exposures.

Key messages:

- Ensure compliance with the minimum requirements regards to lighting, heating and ventilation, set out by the [Detention Services Order 06/2018](#) for rooms used as sleeping.
- Ensure relevant staff members are aware of and understand the business continuity plan.
- Keep occupied rooms or areas below 26°C.
- Promote hydration among staff and individuals being cared for.
- Consider ways to identify and monitor individuals most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses.
- Suggestions on [how to make buildings cooler](#) can be found within the Beat the heat guidance on GOV.UK.
- Employers can consider changes to [manage the risk from hot weather](#) including:
 - Making sure workplace windows can be opened or closed to prevent hot air from circulating or building up.
 - Using blinds or reflective film on windows to shade workers from the sun.
 - Placing workstations away from direct sunlight and heat sources.
 - Putting insulation around hot pipes and machinery.
 - Offering flexible working patterns so workers can work at cooler times of the day.
 - Provide free access to drinking water.
 - Relaxing dress codes if possible.
 - Providing weather-appropriate personal protective equipment.
 - Encouraging workers to remove personal protective equipment when resting (ideally in shaded areas) to cool off.
 - Sharing information about the symptoms of heat stress and what to do if someone is affected.

Check the [hot weather and health: guidance and advice](#) for more detail and adapt actions to your service or organisation as appropriate.

Key Public Health messages

Heat can be harmful to your health.

- Those with heart, respiratory and serious health problems are more at risk and the heat can make these conditions worse. Babies and young children are also especially at risk.
- Danger symptoms to watch out for in hot weather include: feeling faint and dizzy, short of breath, vomiting or increasing confusion.

Look out for others:

- Remember to check on those who are at risk (such as the elderly, ill or very young people).

Stay out of the heat:

- Keep out of the sun between 11:00am and 3:00pm
- If you have to go out in the heat, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a hat and light scarf.
- Avoid extreme physical exertion. If you can't avoid strenuous outdoor activity, then try to do so during cooler parts of the day, like early morning or evening.

Cool yourself down:

- Have plenty of cold drinks, and avoid excess alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks.
- Eat cold foods, particularly salads and fruit with a high water content.
- Take a cool shower, bath or body wash, or sprinkle water over the skin or clothing, or keep a damp cloth on the back of your neck.

Keep your environment cool:

- Keep windows that are exposed to the sun closed during the day, and open windows at night when the temperature has dropped.
- Close curtains that receive morning or afternoon sun.
- Place a thermometer in your main living room and bedroom to keep a check on the temperature.
- Turn off non-essential lights and electrical equipment as they generate heat.
- Keep indoor plants and bowls of water in the house as evaporation helps cool the air.
- If possible, move into a cooler room, especially for sleeping.
- [Cool spaces](#) are available to support residents in keeping cool during hot days.

If you or others feel unwell:

- Try to get help if you feel dizzy, weak, anxious or have intense thirst and headache; move to a cool place as soon as possible and measure your body temperature.
- Call NHS 111 if you are worried about your health during a heatwave.
- Remember, heatstroke can kill. It can develop very suddenly, and rapidly lead to unconsciousness. Contact 999 immediately if you suspect someone has heatstroke.

Check the [hot weather advice for more information on how to stay safe in hot weather](#).