Lancashire County Council
Flu & Cold Weather
2026/27

Delivered by the Health Protection Team

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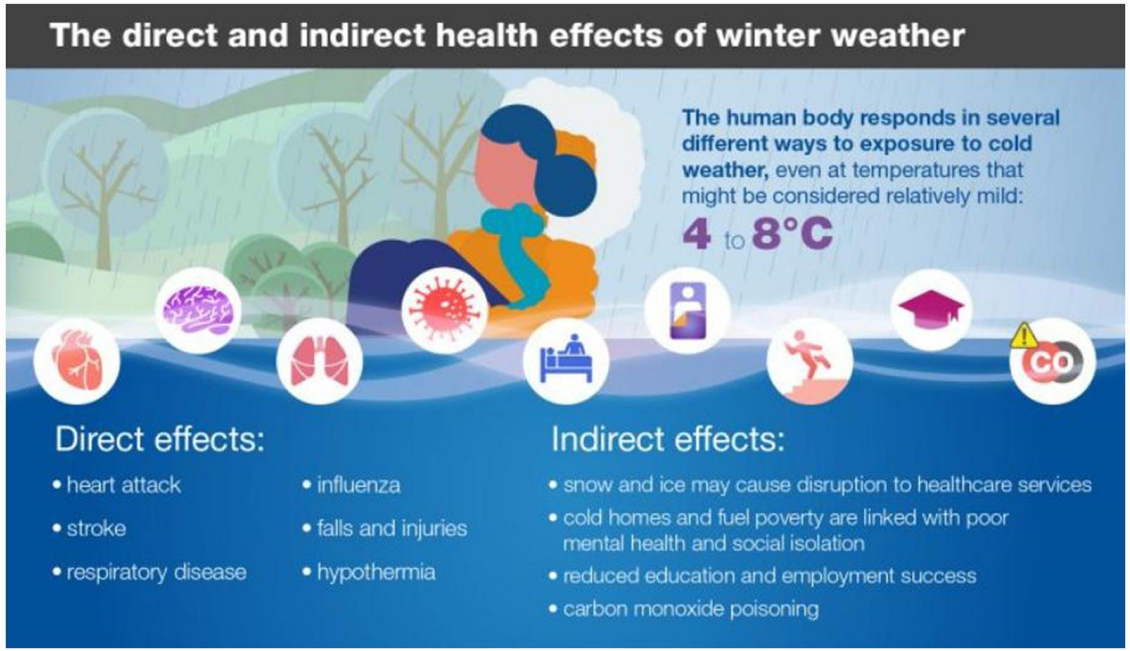
Flu

- Impacts
- Who is eligible
- Where to get it



Cold Weather

- Impacts
- Stats
- What you can do



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NHS Winter Vaccination Programmes

- Flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal vaccines are available to eligible groups.
- Eligibility differs between programmes but do encourage eligible people to take up the vaccines offered.
- Local NHS services (GPs, Maternity) will invite eligible children and adults for their vaccinations and arrange their appointments.
- The ‘winter’ vaccination approach including timing and co-administration aims to help maximise protection, prevent exacerbation of illnesses and reduce hospitalisation.

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So why is flu a problem and how does flu affect us ?

Flu can cause serious illness—especially in vulnerable groups. Getting vaccinated helps:

- Protect individuals at highest risk
- Reduce flu-related hospitalisations and deaths
- Prevent transmission in the community
- Safeguard children and those in care homes

Flu strains change each year, so a new vaccine is needed annually. The 2026/27 flu vaccination programme began on 1 September 2026 for specified cohorts, with remaining eligible cohorts offered vaccination from 1 October 2026

Flu activity usually occurs from mid-November and peaks in late December-February, but seasonal timing varies

2025 to 2026 saw an unusually earlier start (from late October), the first early season in 20 years

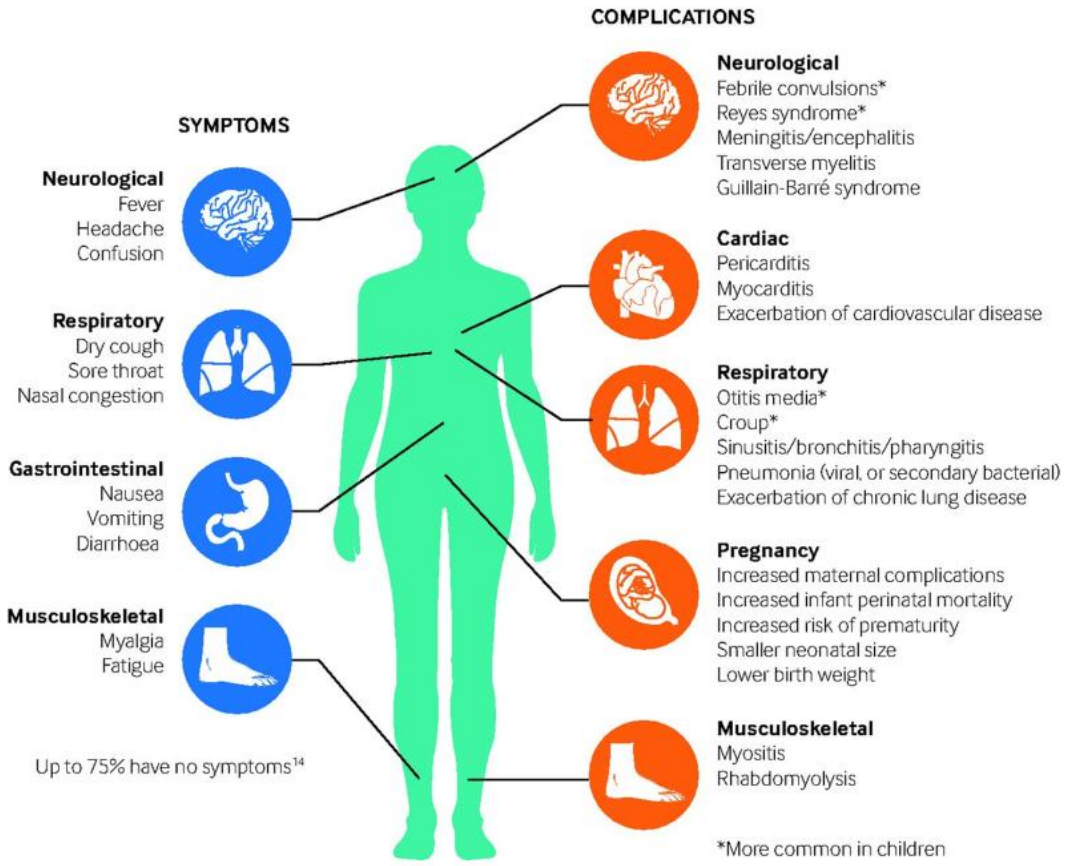
2015 to 2016 was the most recent late season, with flu activity peaking at Easter

Sources: The national flu vaccination programme 2026 to 2027 & LSC ICB Winter Planning

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Flu Complications

Flu can cause severe complications (often life-threatening).



SOME PEOPLE INFECTED WITH INFLUENZA MAY HAVE NO SYMPTOMS OR MILD SYMPTOMS BUT MAY STILL CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSMISSION

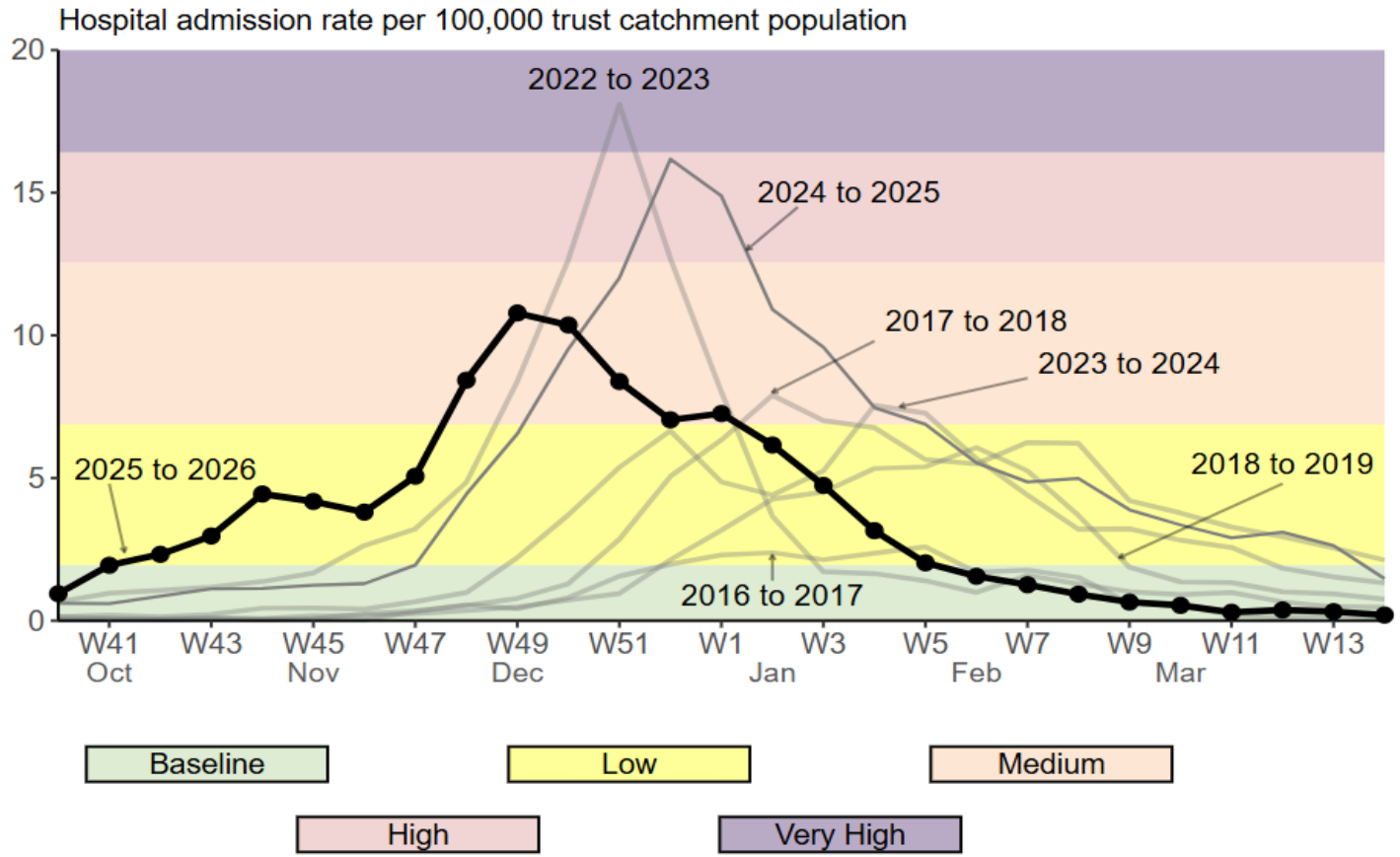
Information taken from LSC ICB Winter Planning

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Main messages from the 2025/2026 flu season

- Modelling indicated that, in England, the 2025/26 vaccination programme prevented an estimated 104,000 hospital admissions and 7,100 deaths

Weekly influenza hospital admission rates*

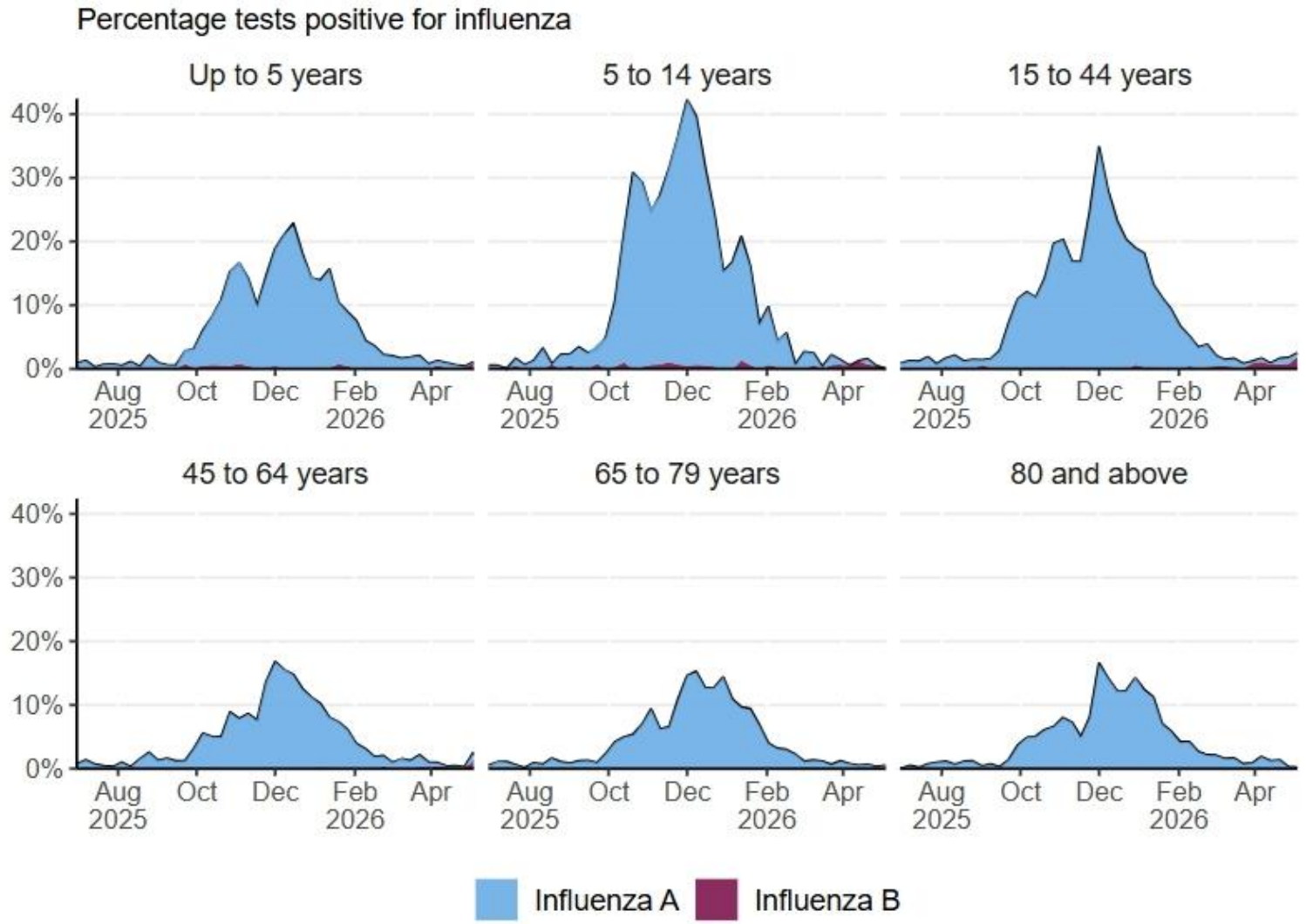


*per 100,000 trust catchment population

Graph taken from: Influenza in the UK, annual epidemiological report: winter 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

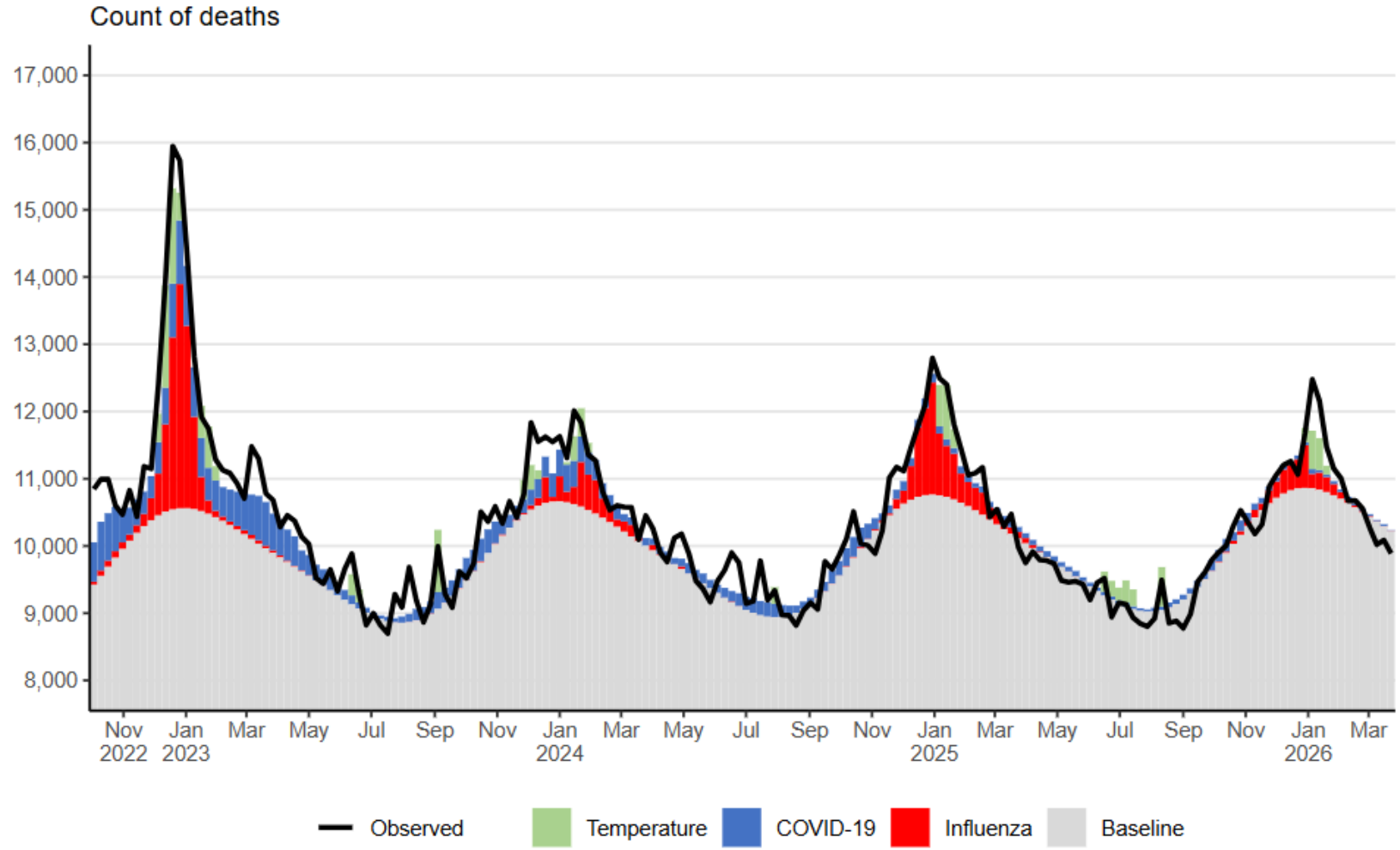
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Weekly percentage of tests positive for influenza by age and influenza type, Respiratory Datamart sentinel laboratories, England, 2025 to 2026 season



Graph taken from: [Influenza in the UK, annual epidemiological report: winter 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK]

Figure 54. Weekly number of all-age deaths and attribution to influenza, COVID-19 and cold weather, England, week 40 2022 to week 13 2026



Graph taken from: [Influenza in the UK, annual epidemiological report: winter 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK]



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Vaccine uptake in target groups in the UK England 2025-2026 season			
Target group	**Number vaccinated**	**Number eligible**	**% vaccine uptake**
65 years and over	8,674,672	11,644,058	74.5
65 years to under 75 years	5,925,040	4,037,382	68.1
75 years and over	5,719,018	4,637,290	81.1
6 months to under 65yrs and at risk	3,899,528	9,596,589	40.6
Pregnant with no risk factors	205,811	558,994	36.8
Pregnant with risk factors	41,526	84,724	49.0
All pregnant	247,337	643,718	38.4
Frontline healthcare workers	534,701	1,183,244	45.2

Seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in GP patients in England: winter season 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

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The free NHS flu vaccine is available to people most at risk from flu and their carers

Who is eligible from 1 September 2026:

- pregnant women
- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31st August 2026
- all primary school children (Reception to Year 6)
- all secondary school children (Year 7 to Year 11)
- all children in clinical risk groups aged from 6 months to less than 18 years

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Then from 1st October 2026:

All those from September plus……..

- those aged 65 years and over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2027)
- are aged 18 to 64 and have certain long-term health conditions
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers and household contacts of immuno-compromised individuals
- frontline social care workers without employer-led occupational health schemes (including personal assistants and those working in care homes, domiciliary care, or hospices)

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Plus new for this flu season

- people aged 16 years and over experiencing homelessness, defined as those who are rough sleepers and those using homeless hostels or night-shelters

This year is the first year flu vaccines are available to this group and if you work with anyone who falls into this category, please advise them that a free flu vaccination is available.

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Why should I get the vaccine?

Flu viruses change each year so past infection don't guarantee protection against current variants, and as Immunity wanes over time you need to get vaccinated every year if you can.

Being healthy doesn't stop you from catching or spreading flu, even healthy people can have flu without symptoms and pass it on, especially to vulnerable people- maybe a pregnant colleague or someone with a compromised immune system .

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself, your friend's, family and your colleagues this winter reducing your chances of becoming seriously ill or needing hospital care.

Get your flu vaccination as soon as you're offered it as this as this will provide optimal protection during the highest risk period and helping to make symptoms milder and shorter if you do catch flu.

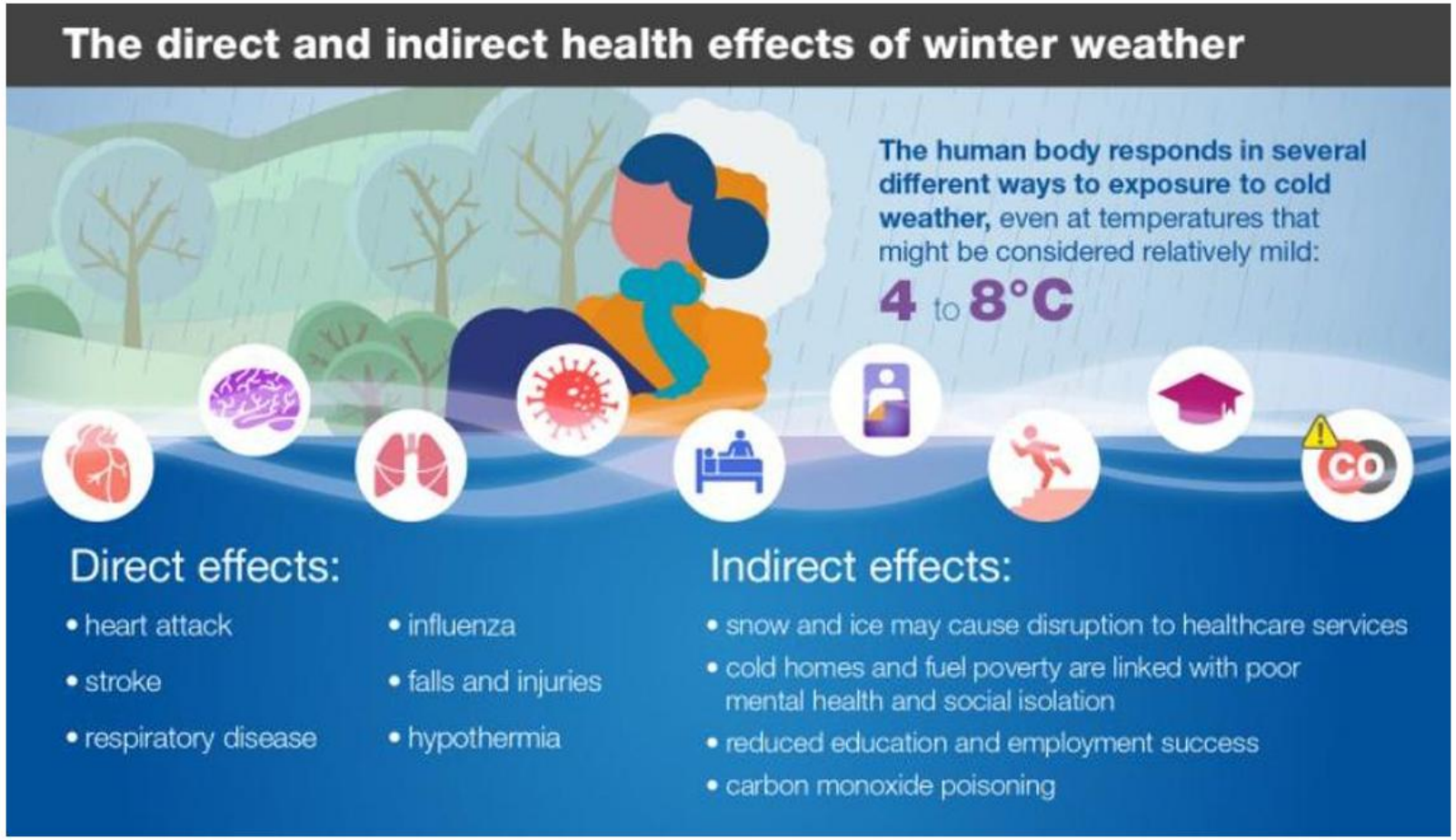
The flu vaccine is safe, effective and quick with any side effects like a sore arm or a mild temperature usually short lived and less severe than flu itself.

You can't get flu from the vaccine as it contains inactivated (killed) fragments of influenza viruses or weakened live influenza viruses for nasal spray vaccines used in children, but these cannot cause the disease itself.

National flu immunisation programme 2026 to 2027 letter - GOV.

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Cold weather actions

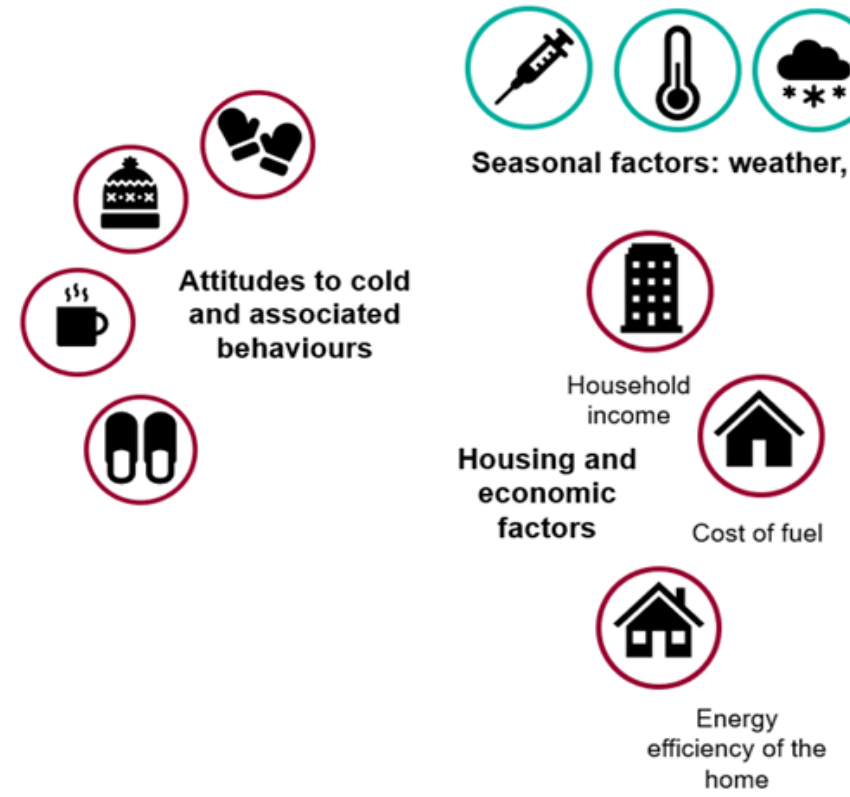


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Although the risk of death increases as temperatures fall, evidence shows that most of the health burden due to cold weather occurs at outdoor temperatures considered relatively mild 4-8^{0}C. It doesn't need to be freezing or below to negatively affect your health.	
Temperature	<u>Health impacts</u> The human body responds in different ways to exposure to cold weather, even at temperatures which might be considered relatively mild.
18^{oC}	Minimal risks to health for a sedentary person wearing suitable clothing
Under 18^{oC} 	• <u>Increases blood pressure</u> and risk of clotting, <u>potentially leading to heart attack and stroke</u> <u>even in healthy people</u> who are sedentary and/or wearing minimal clothes.
Under 16^{oC} 	<u>Increase in respiratory diseases</u> e.g. bronchitis and pneumonia due to - • suppression of the immune system • increased airways constriction and mucus production in the lungs, • diminished capacity of lungs to fight off infection.
4-8^{oC}	Increased risk of death at population level- take care
At or below 5^{oC}	High risk of hypothermia

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Who is affected by the cold and why?



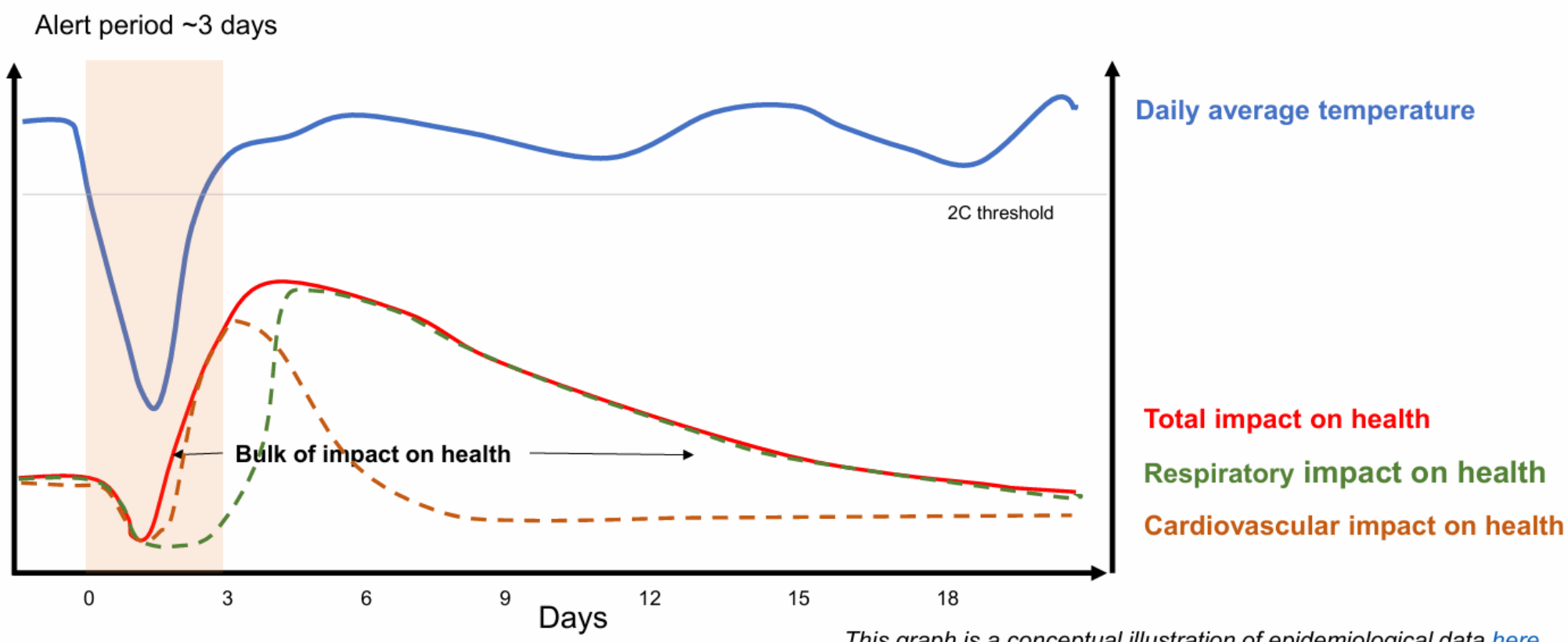
Individual vulnerability to health effects of cold

- older people (aged 65 years and over)
- people with long-term health conditions such as cardiovascular or respiratory disease, or a mental health condition
- pregnant women
- young children (particularly those aged 5 and under)
- people with learning disabilities
- people at risk of falls
- people who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves
- people who are housebound or have low mobility
- people living in deprived circumstances

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The lag in health impacts following a cold episode

Multiple impacts of cold weather



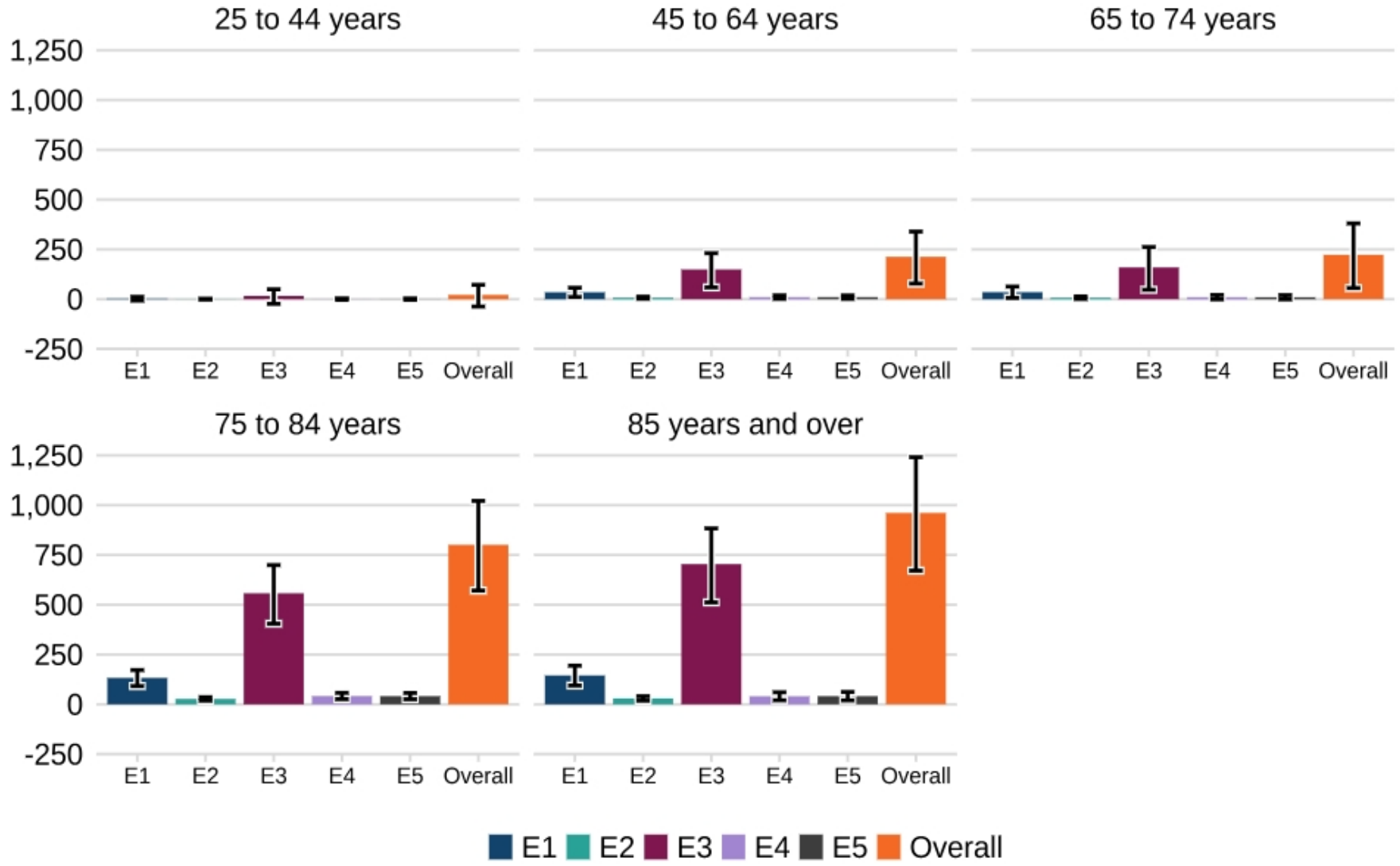
This graph is a conceptual illustration of epidemiological data here

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Winter 2025- 2026

- A cold episode is defined as a period of 2 or more consecutive days during which the average daily mean temperature falls below 2°C – (recorded separately for each region of England)
- There were 5 cold episodes (E1-5) meeting this definition, comprising a total of 18 days-the third cold episode lasted 9 days (2 January 2026 to 10 January 2026)
- Most regions showed a similar pattern, with higher mortality risk at lower temperatures, particularly below around 5°C although the Northwest had the highest number of cold-associated deaths over the winter

Cold associated deaths by age group, England, winter 2025- 2026



Cold associated deaths by place 2025-2026

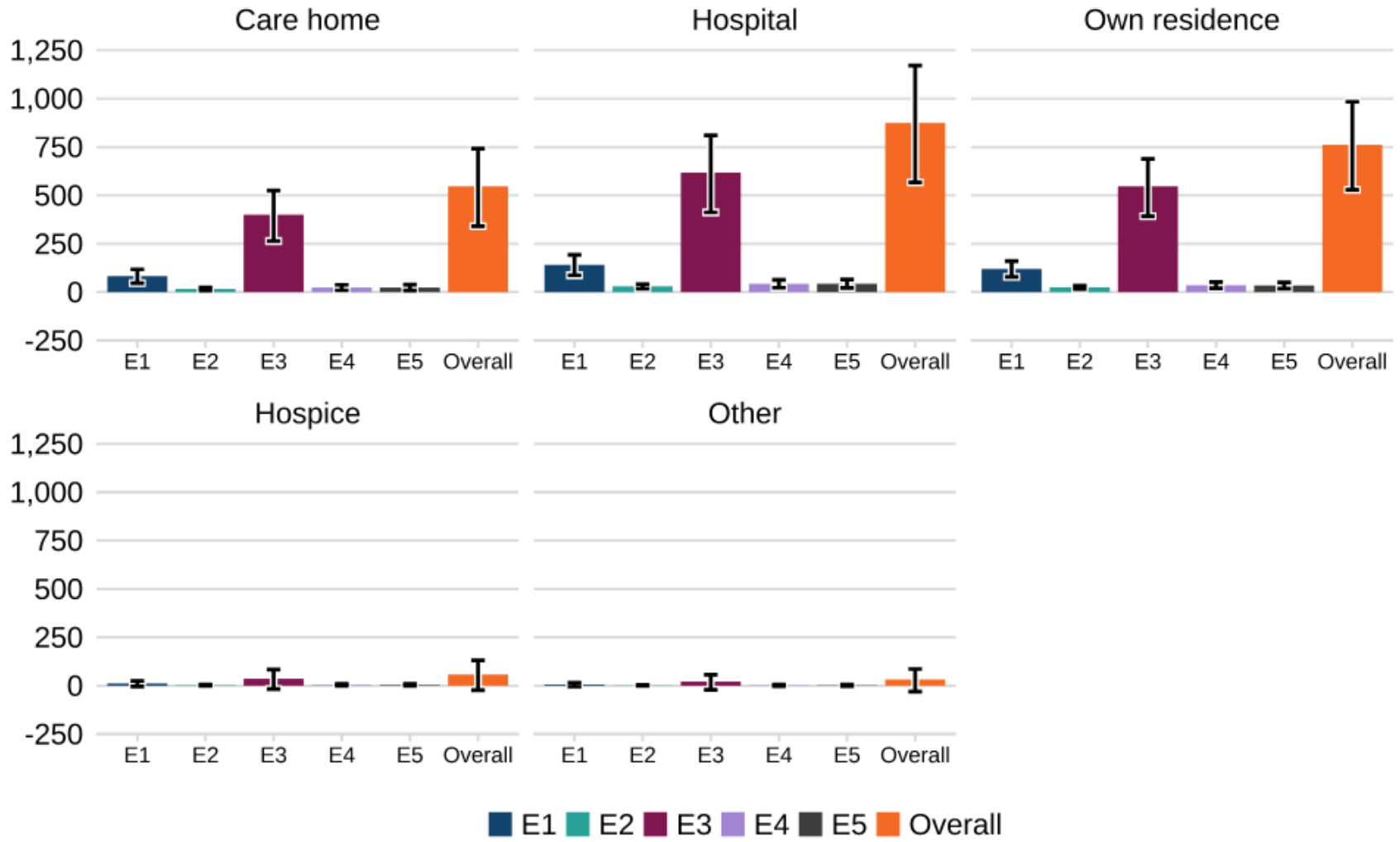
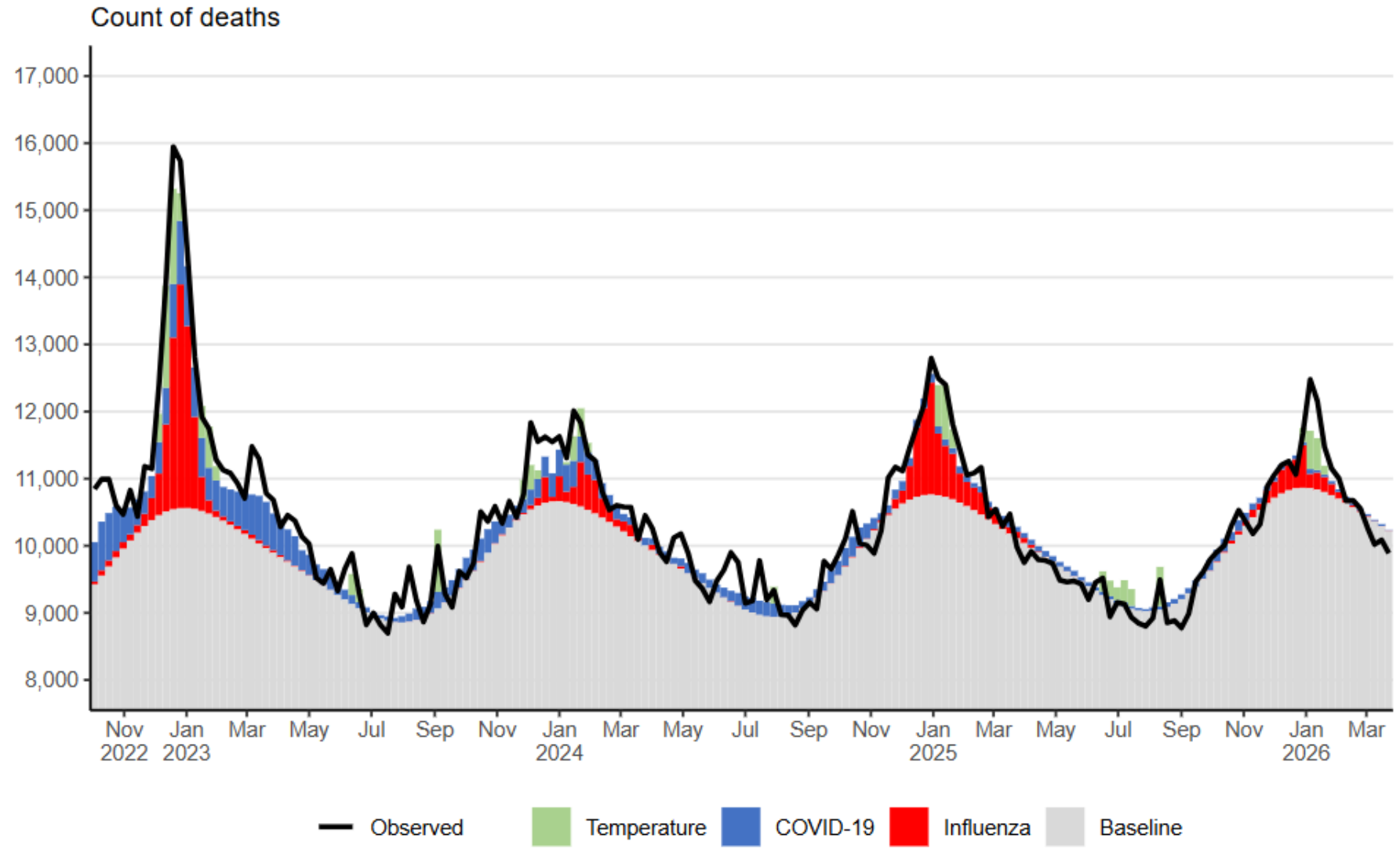


Figure 54. Weekly number of all-age deaths and attribution to influenza, COVID-19 and cold weather, England, week 40 2022 to week 13 2026



How to sign up for alerts

Either go to:

www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/cold-weather-alerts and click on ‘signing up for alerts’

Or – click on the link below to take you directly to the registration form

Weather-Health Alerting system

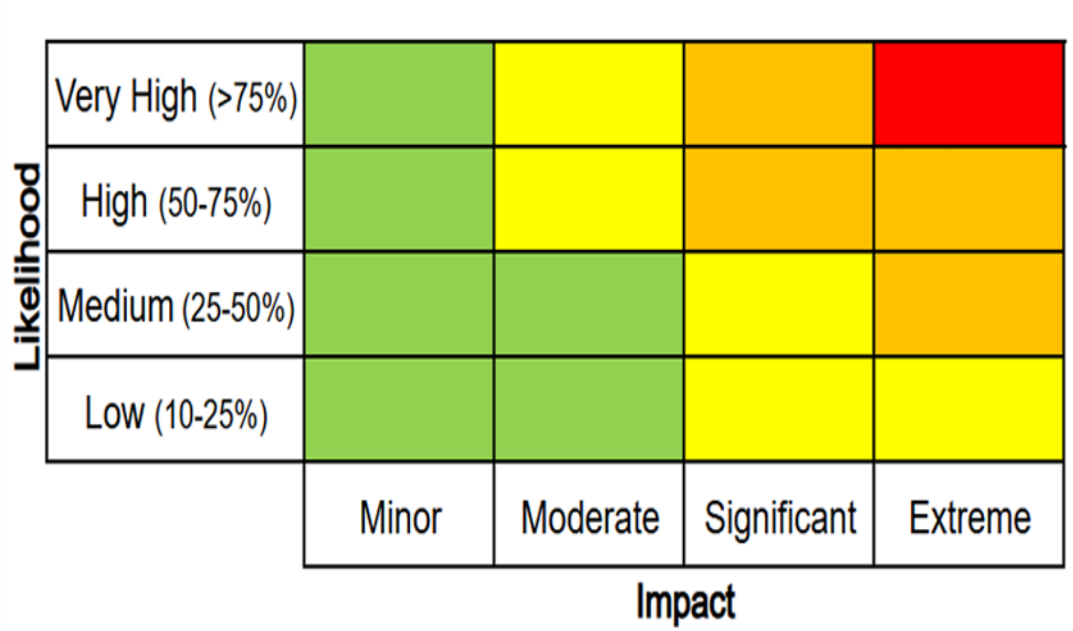
May also wish to sign up for Met Office weather warnings

Met Office – Rain/Wind/Snow/Ice etc

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Met Office

New Matrix



- The Weather health alerting system is provided by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in partnership with the Met Office.
- Intended to provide early warning when adverse temperatures are likely to impact on the health and wellbeing of the population.
- The Cold - health alerting system runs from **1 November to 31 March** each year.

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Levels of alert

Green (preparedness) – no alert is issued as the conditions are likely to have minimal impact on health; it's business as usual but begin winter planning and preparedness activities.

Yellow (response) – yellow alerts may be issued during periods of cold that are unlikely to impact most people but could impact anyone particularly vulnerable

Amber (enhanced response) weather impacts likely to be felt across the whole health service – with greater risk to health of vulnerable groups (over 65's, those with health conditions or sleeping rough) and potential of risk to whole population including younger age groups. Non health sectors may observe impacts and a significant coordinated response may be required

Red (Emergency response) Indicates a significant risk to life even for the healthy population.

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Green (preparedness) – no alert is issued as the conditions are likely to have minimal impact on health; it's business as usual but begin winter planning and preparedness activities.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Managers

- All staff to have sight of the Cold – Health Alert Action Card
- Business Impact Assessments
- Emergency contact details
- Vulnerable staff?
- Winter vaccines

Staff

- Boiler serviced
- Carbon monoxide detectors tested
- Priority Services register for utilities

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Yellow (response) – yellow alerts may be issued during periods of cold that are unlikely to impact most people but could impact anyone particularly vulnerable

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Managers

- Remind staff of Cold – Health Alert Action Card
- Maintain contact – home workers
- Consider impacts on service delivery – client visits, trips etc

Staff

- Keep an eye on the weather – Met Office alerts
- Working from home – at least 18°C
- Travelling – is your car winter ready, be cautious in car parks

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Amber (enhanced response) weather impacts likely to be felt across the whole health service – with greater risk to health of vulnerable groups (over 65's, those with health conditions or sleeping rough) and potential of risk to whole population including younger age groups. Non health sectors may observe impacts and a significant coordinated response may be required

The Council's Resilience Team will co-ordinate any actions required at Amber and Red levels

- Follow advice from your HoS (and/or Resilience Team)
- Refer to your Business Impact Assessment
- Communicate to staff e.g. awareness about self resilience / self care – winter travel kit etc

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RED (Emergency response) Indicates a significant risk to life even for the healthy population.

- Monitor impact on service delivery and escalate concerns through your agreed channels
- Consider whether a risk assessment for and response to cold weather is required for your function
- Support staff, keeping in touch with vulnerable communities and staff supporting those communities.

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Key messages

- Get the flu vaccination as soon as you are able - protect yourself and others. If you meet the NHS flu eligibility criteria book via the national booking service
- Vaccination can also be supported by good hand and respiratory hygiene
  - Wash your hands thoroughly & regularly
  - Make use of tissues to catch coughs and sneezes
- Sign up for the Cold Weather alerts – Weather-Health Alerting system - be prepared, follow the advice and guidance.
- Be aware of the indirect effects of the cold – and the lag between cold weather and impacts

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Thank you for listening

If you have any further queries, please email healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk