

## PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 19 December 2013

## Have you taken the Winter Friends pledge?

NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are supporting the national Winter Friends Campaign and calling on people to look in on an elderly friend or neighbour this winter to make sure that they are warm and well.

Signing up to the Winter Friends pledge is simple, it states that *"I will take time out this winter to look in on an elderly friend or neighbour to make sure they are warm and coping well."* Those who sign the Winter Friends pledge will receive free cold weather alerts and email tips throughout the winter to help them do their bit. By taking part, you can make a big difference to the community and the elderly population. You can find out more information or sign the pledge by visiting [www.nhs.uk/winterfriends](http://www.nhs.uk/winterfriends).

Last winter, about 31,000 people in England died as a result of cold weather. Most of these people were over 75 and many of these deaths could have been avoided. Every year, hundreds of thousands of older people spend much of the winter alone and lonely. According to Age UK, 1 in 20 people in the UK aged 65 and over say they spent Christmas Day alone in 2010. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Jo Galloway, Executive Nurse - Quality and Patient Safety for NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG said: "Older people, especially those who are more vulnerable can become isolated in the winter months, and the cold weather can have a serious impact on their health.

"Looking in on an elderly neighbour can make a huge difference, helping to prevent loneliness and making sure they are safe and warm. We would encourage everyone to sign the Winter Friends pledge and help their local community as well as elderly relatives and friends to give them the support they need.

"People need to remember to keep their house warm (living rooms should be around 21°C or 70°F), keep cupboards well stocked with food in case of a cold weather spell and wrap up warm when out and about. Free flu jabs are also available to anyone over 65, pregnant women and people with long-term health conditions."

### Five ways you can help after signing the Winter Friends pledge:

1. Set some time aside to drop in on an older neighbour or friend once a week - more often if the weather turns very cold.
2. Check their home is warm enough. The main living area should be around 21°C (70°F) and bedrooms should be 18°C (65°F). If they are worried about the costs of heating, check they are receiving their heating bill benefits, such as Winter Fuel Payment ([www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](http://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)) and Cold Weather Payment ([www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment](http://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment)). If there are draughts you may be able to help plug them.
3. Food is a vital source of energy that helps keep us warm. Make sure the person you are looking in on is eating well and has some non-perishable foods in the cupboard that they can heat up in case they can't leave the house for a few days. Tinned meals and soups are ideal.
4. Many older people take medicines and everyone over 65 should have a free flu jab. Ask if there is anything you can do to help – picking up a prescription or giving them a lift to the GP's, for instance. And if you are unwell take real care not to pass it on.
5. It's also important for people to keep active and get out if they can. Make sure the person you are helping has warm and grippy shoes and a good coat, hat and gloves. Offer to walk with them if they are not confident alone. If it snows clear the path to their door for them

**-Ends-**

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## Notes for Editors

- For more information about NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group please visit [www.redditchandbromsgroveccg.nhs.uk](http://www.redditchandbromsgroveccg.nhs.uk)
- NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG represents 22 GP practices and serves a patient population of 170,000 patients.
- Find out all the latest news by 'liking' our page on Facebook [www.facebook.com/redditchandbromsgroveccg](http://www.facebook.com/redditchandbromsgroveccg)

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