

coldAlert press release

1st November 2012

In response to the Department of Health Cold Weather Plans (2011 and 2012) East and West Sussex County Councils have in partnership with the Sussex Air Quality Partnership (Sussex-air) developed a pilot service called coldAlert. The pilot service, provided by Sussex-air, is to start from 1st November and will warn people of severe cold weather events over the winter (2012/13).

"In 2010/11, there were 23,700 more deaths in England between the months of December 2010 and March 2011 than were observed over the rest of the year." (Cold Weather Plan for England 2012)

coldAlert has been developed to provide messages directly to individuals (their carers and health professionals) whose health and well-being is vulnerable during cold weather events. The service will send text, email and voice messages (to home phones) to service users when cold weather alerts are issued. coldAlert will notify service users when conditions change in relation to the national cold weather alert levels. (Department of Health - Cold weather plan for England (2012)).

The coldAlert pilot will operate over this winter (1st November 2012 to 31st March 2013) The aim of developing a coldAlert pilot service in Sussex is to provide a cold weather alerting service to support:

- The health and well-being of vulnerable people, their carers, health professionals, public health, local authorities and associated winter response agencies, during cold weather events.
- Reducing emergency hospital admissions, GP consultations and prescribed drug use arising from the severe cold weather.

The coldAlert pilot will be free to invited users through selected surgeries and clinics across East and West Sussex. Surgeries or clinics interested in becoming involved in this pilot can contact the service by visiting the coldAlert website www.coldalert.info to register their interest.

In addition the coldAlert pilot service will provide information to the public through other media such as the coldAlert website www.coldalert.info and twitter @ColdAlertSussex. Apps for iPhone and Android smart phones will also be available in early 2013. The website will provide helpful information about what to do in cold weather events and provide advice on keeping warm and healthy over the winter.

Supporting Information

- The coldAlert pilot has been developed through support from the Warm Homes Health People fund (2011) via West and East Sussex County Councils.
- The Sussex Air Quality Partnership (Sussex-air) is a local authority partnership, which provides support and information on air quality across Sussex. See www.sussex-air.net
- Sussex-air has operated a similar air pollution alert service in Sussex since 2006 called airAlert. See www.airalert.info.
- Department of Health - Cold weather plan for England (2012) <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/10/cwp-2012/>

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