



## Top tips for surviving the weather

**Contingency planning in homecare is vitally important and the winter weather never fails to challenge homecare providers. It may take a long time to create a plan that ensures the service runs as smoothly as possible during the disruption but they are vital to ensure that no one is left without care during snowfall or flood. We've outlined some top tips here for coping with the next bout of bad weather.**

### **Our top tips for keeping calm and carrying on in the snow are:**

1. Check and revise your emergency plans, and sign up for severe weather warnings and weather forecasts.
2. Review all care plans to identify vulnerable clients, develop a system so you know who has support if you are unable to visit and who does not; be ready to revise rotas and contact relatives/ neighbours and users about rota changes.
3. Establish a system so you can check on all your vulnerable clients, make sure staff have access to essential supplies to keep clients warm and stocked with provisions if they are unable to go out; be prepared to handle any emergency medication issues.
4. Liaise with your local council so you are part of its emergency planning process. Consider developing plans with them to help support council users, and decide if you need to make reciprocal plans with another organisation to help visit users in particularly remote areas.
5. Work out what happens if key managers or staff are unable to get to the office or visit users.
6. Develop a moveable office so you can run your office remotely if it is impossible to get to your building; consider if any of your staff need to be set up to work from home or an alternative address.
7. Make sure you know which staff are likely to have difficulty with transport and work out how you can help them.
8. Make sure your staff know who to contact if they run into difficulty by distributing an emergency phone list.
9. Consider transport issues – do you need to equip your vehicles with shovels, snow tyres or chains? Can your staff walk to users, or use alternative transport like bicycles, or share four wheel drive transport.
10. Ensure care workers' vehicles are properly maintained – hunt down offers and deals to do with servicing, tyres and MOTs in advance to make sure their vehicles are safe and care workers get a good price.
11. Be aware of road closures and delays in general.
12. Review your lone working policy so you can support your staff working alone in adverse weather conditions. It's vital to know where everyone is, and that staff and service users are safe.

**Once the poor weather is over and things return to normal, it's good practice to review your experiences, so you can learn from what happened. Don't forget to thank your staff for their efforts and listen to their views, and those of your service users, so that you are even better prepared to react the following winter.**

With thanks to UKHCA members Scott Care for their help with this article. To find out more about joining UKHCA, the professional association for homecare providers, see: [www.ukhca.co.uk/joining.aspx](http://www.ukhca.co.uk/joining.aspx)



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