together we are GREATER MANCHESTER

Talking About Heat

A toolkit for organisations supporting older people during hot weather

GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Why we created this toolkit

This toolkit has been created by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in consultation with older people across Greater Manchester. Its aim is to help organisations to effectively communicate hot weather risks to older people, supporting them to protect their health and wellbeing during periods of extreme heat.

In the summer of 2022, heatwaves caused 2,809 more deaths of people aged 65 and over in England than would normally be expected. With high temperatures becoming increasingly common as our climate changes, it is vital that we support older adults to look after themselves during hot weather.

Many older people don't see themselves as being at risk of extreme heat and are therefore not taking action to stay safe. To understand how best to address this, we engaged with over 150 older residents in Greater Manchester through surveys and focus groups in 2025. What we heard from them, and from organisations who work with older people, was clear: **the way we talk about heat needs to change.**

We encourage organisations supporting older people to use this toolkit, which includes suggested messaging and a checklist with advice from the NHS, Age UK and government, to strengthen how we communicate the risks associated with heatwaves and hot weather.

What older people told us

From our conversations with older people, it became evident that the way we say something can be as important as what we say. Based on our insights, we encourage your organisations to:

- Make sure your messages are clear, catchy, colourful and easy to understand.
- Focus on health and wellbeing, not climate change.
- Avoid singling older people out or labelling them as "vulnerable". Use language that includes everyone.
- Share messages through trusted voices, like local GPs, community workers, or faith leaders.
- Keep advice practical and relevant to daily life. Older people want to feel informed, not frightened.
- Send information out during a heat event, rather than too far in advance, so it feels timely and relevant.

Checklist

Plan ahead

- [ ] Make sure your team is signed up to the government's Weather-health Alerting system. These alerts (yellow, amber or red) tell you when action is needed.

- [ ] Use the Heat-Health Alerting system action cards to plan and guide your response at each alert level. Action cards provide guidance on the actions organisations should take to prepare for and respond to heat-health alerts to protect health and reduce heat-related harms.

- [ ] Prepare communications in advance to be sent at times when the weather is at yellow heat-health alert level or above. Keep messaging short, practical and easy to follow. Use trusted sources such as gov.uk, nhs.uk, or the suggested text provided with this toolkit.

- [ ] Know the evidence: Review the government's Adverse Weather and Health Plan: Supporting evidence for details on health impacts and vulnerable groups.

Communicate effectively

- [ ] Provide quick briefings or handouts so all frontline staff and volunteers know what to say and do.

- [ ] Use trusted channels to share messages, including:

    - Local GPs and pharmacies
    - Community centres and libraries
    - Faith groups, community groups and local newsletters
    - Pre-existing text alerts or WhatsApp groups

- [ ] Promote cool spaces - libraries, community centres, and even shopping centres can be lifelines during a heatwave.

Provide direct support

- [ ] Attend free online Summer Ready training provided by the Greater Manchester Resilience Unit, which provides advice on how to support those most at risk during extreme heat. To find out more, contact gmru@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk.

- [ ] Print copies of the Stay Cool, Stay Well infographic, which provides advice on how to stay safe during hot weather. You can also share ready-made comms from the NHS or UKHSA to keep messaging clear and trusted.

- [ ] Check in with people at risk, especially those who: are living alone, are digitally excluded, don't speak English as their first language or have health conditions or sensory needs.

Suggested text for communications with older people

Shorter message

Hot weather is coming. Stay safe!

Keep out of the sun, keep hydrated, keep you and your home cool.

For tips to beat the heat, search ‘hot weather advice’ on GOV.UK.

Longer message

Hot weather is coming so take extra care:

- Drink water often
- Stay in the shade or indoors between 11am and 3pm
- Keep your home cool - close curtains by day, open windows at night
- Wear light, loose clothes
- On medication? Ask your pharmacist if heat affects it
- Check in with others, and let someone check in on you

For more tips, search ‘Beat the Heat UKHSA’ or visit gov.uk/government/publications/beat-the-heat-hot-weather-advice

Additional resources

You can download our 'Stay Cool, Stay Well' infographic which provides advice on how to stay safe during hot weather.

Use our resources, or other trusted ready-to-use comms from:

- NHS Campaigns | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership
- UKHSA Beat the Heat

To find out more about the work of the partners who developed this toolkit, visit GMCA's Ageing Hub.

together we are GREATER MANCHESTER