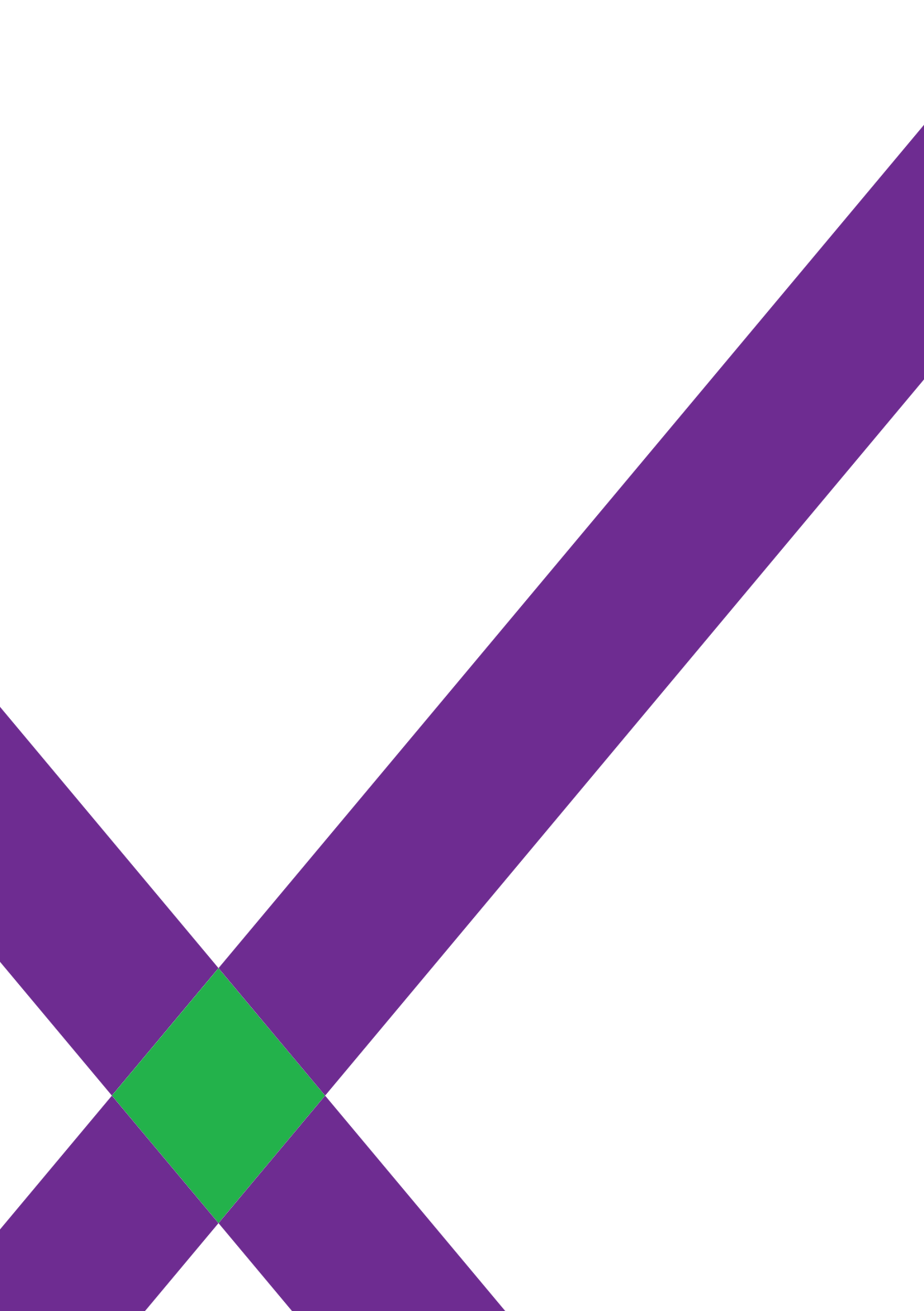
NEXUS

CARE SERVICES

Winter Care Guide

Beat the winter blues with our home care services





A message from Nexus Care Services

During winter, the wellbeing of our loved ones becomes even more critical. Cold weather and darker, longer nights can bring additional challenges, particularly for those who may already be managing health issues or frailty.

At Nexus Care Services, we are deeply committed to supporting families through these times, ensuring that those requiring care not only remain safe and warm, but also feel valued and cared for.

With more than a decade of experience in the care sector, we understand first-hand the difficulties that families face when looking after older relatives during winter.

From ensuring their home stays comfortable to making sure they have the right support in place, the season can be both challenging and rewarding.

This guide is designed to offer you practical advice and expert insights that can help make winter easier for both you and your loved ones.

Whether it's choosing the right footwear to prevent falls, keeping homes warm and safe or understanding how frailty can affect health, we are here to help you navigate these important aspects of winter care.

Our team at Nexus Care Services is always ready to assist, offering the support and guidance you need to ensure your loved ones stay healthy, safe and comfortable throughout the winter months.

Tinga Umera, Managing Director



Managing frailty in winter – The Rockwood Frailty Scale

Adults with frailty are at increased risk during the winter and are more likely to experience falls, hospitalisation or complications from cold-related illnesses.

The Rockwood Frailty Scale is a clinical tool used to assess frailty in older adults, helps identify those at higher risk and guides appropriate care strategies.

Understanding frailty

Frailty is characterised by a decline in the body's ability to cope with stress and it often leads to an increased vulnerability to injury or illness.

The Rockwood Frailty Scale uses a numerical scale from 0 to 9 to assess frailty based on various clinical factors:

- **0** – **Very Fit** - People who are robust, active, energetic and motivated. These people commonly exercise regularly. They are among the fittest for their age.
- **1-3** – **Well** - People with mild health conditions, such as limited mobility occasional fatigue. These people are rarely or only occasionally active.
- **4-6** – **Frail** - People with some difficulty performing activities of daily living, such as getting dressed or walking long distances. They may need mild assistance.
- **7-9** – **Severely frail** - People requiring significant assistance with daily activities, such as need help with eating, dressing or personal care.

You can get an official assessment conducted to determine where your loved one falls within this scale, but you are likely to already have some appreciation of this based on their behaviour.

Managing frailty during winter

Once you have an idea of how frail your loved one may be, it is important to take the following steps:

- **Monitor health closely:** Those rated as frail — 4-9 on the scale — are at higher risk of complications, such as pneumonia, hypothermia, or severe falls during winter, so regular check-ups with their healthcare provider are essential.
- **Preventing falls:** A fall can have a significant impact on a person's life and so for individuals with moderate or severe frailty, it is crucial to minimise the risk of falls. Remove any tripping hazards at home, ensure adequate lighting and consider mobility aids, such as walkers or grab rails for increased stability.
- **Hydration and Nutrition:** Ensure your loved one eats a balanced diet rich in nutrients, especially Vitamin D, which helps maintain bone health and resilience during winter. Keep them hydrated, as dehydration can exacerbate frailty symptoms.
- **Encourage Physical Activity:** Gentle, indoor exercises can help maintain strength and flexibility. Activities like chair exercises or stretching can promote circulation and prevent muscle weakness, which increases frailty risk.

Having these discussions with your loved ones can be challenging, but they are essential to understanding what care they may require and whether you are able to provide it on your own or if additional help is necessary.

When is additional care needed?

As we age, the level of care required can change. Your loved ones may become more vulnerable to physical or cognitive decline and their needs can evolve as winter brings additional risks.

Recognising when additional care is needed is crucial for ensuring that your loved one is safe, comfortable, and receiving the appropriate level of support.

The need for additional care often arises in situations such as:

- **Increased frailty or difficulty with daily activities:** When a family member or friend begins to struggle with tasks like dressing, cooking, or bathing, it may be time to consider additional support.
- **Health conditions that require monitoring:** If they have a chronic illness, a recent hospital discharge, or are experiencing cognitive decline, ongoing care may be necessary.
- **Increased risk of falls or accidents:** Winter increases the risk of falls due to slippery surfaces, cold weather, and reduced mobility. If the person needing care is unsteady on their feet, additional care may improve their safety and help to prevent injuries.
- **Isolation:** Loneliness and isolation can affect mental health, especially during the winter months when staying active and social is harder. If the person you care for is unable to leave the house or if you are unable to visit regularly, additional support may help combat isolation.
- **Difficulty managing medications:** If your loved one has multiple medications and is struggling to manage them, professional care may be required to ensure their health and safety.

When additional care is needed, families may need to choose from several options depending on the level of assistance required.

On the following pages we explain the differences between various types of care to help you make an informed decision.

Types of care

There are a wide range of care choices to consider, each with their own merits and disadvantages.

It is easy to jump to an assumption that the highest level of care is required, but in many cases care in the home, with the right level of support, might be the best solution.

Home care

Home care involves a carer visiting your loved one's home to assist with everyday tasks, such as personal care, housekeeping, meal preparation and companionship.

This is a good choice for families seeking support, while allowing their loved one to maintain independence in their home. When to consider home care:

- When your loved one needs help with specific daily tasks but still wishes to remain in their own home.
- For companionship or light assistance, without the need for full-time care.

Live-in care

Live-in care is a more intensive form of home care where a trained carer moves into the home to provide 24/7 support.

This type of care is ideal for individuals who require continuous assistance but prefer to stay at home rather than moving to a residential care facility. When to consider live-in care:

- When your loved one requires around-the-clock care, either due to frailty, illness, or cognitive issues.
- If you or your family members are unable to provide the care needed but prefer that the individual remains at home.

Supported living

Supported living is an option for adults with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health issues who are capable of living independently with some assistance.

Residents live in their own flats or rooms within a communal setting but receive help with daily activities like meal preparation, budgeting, and personal care when needed. When to consider supported living:

- If your loved one is capable of living independently but needs help with some daily tasks or requires a safe, structured environment.
- For adults who do not require full-time nursing care but need help managing day-to-day living.

Nursing care

Nursing care is the most intensive form of care available and is designed for individuals who have complex medical needs and require round-the-clock care from qualified nurses.

Nursing homes provide full-time medical supervision for those with chronic health conditions, recovery needs, or severe cognitive impairment. When to consider nursing care:

- When your loved one has complex medical needs or requires constant supervision from healthcare professionals.
- For individuals with chronic conditions like dementia, Alzheimer's, or other serious health concerns that require regular monitoring and medical intervention.

Making the right care choice

Deciding the right level of care for your loved one can be a difficult decision. Factors such as the degree of assistance needed, personal preferences and the ability to remain at home all play an important role in the choice of care.

At Nexus Care Services, we believe in offering bespoke home care solutions, tailored to your loved one's unique needs, ensuring they receive the appropriate support in the comfort of their own home.

We regularly advise people on the best types of care for their family and friends and will always recommend the environment that best meets a person's needs — even if it isn't a service that we provide.

Our team is always available to discuss your options and perform an initial care assessment that will help to guide you through the decision-making process, ensuring that your loved one's wellbeing and safety are always our top priority.


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The challenges of isolation and the importance of companionship

Whilst frailty is a critical issue during the winter, isolation is also a key problem for many older people.

Isolation becomes more pronounced during the colder months, particularly in winter when weather conditions limit mobility and opportunities for social interaction.

The effects of loneliness and isolation can be both physical and mental, impacting overall health, emotional wellbeing and even longevity.

The impact of isolation on older adults

At first it may only seem that isolation affects a person's mood, but a number of studies have found its effects to be far wider reaching.

Isolation should be taken as seriously as any other physical ailment.

Ignoring it could put your loved one at risk from developing new conditions that damage their health.

The importance of companionship

Companionship plays a critical role in combatting isolation and promoting a higher quality of life for older adults.

Engaging with others on a regular basis has numerous benefits, both physically and emotionally.

Emotional support: Having someone to talk to, share experiences with, and provide encouragement can significantly improve an elderly person's emotional health. The comfort of knowing someone is there to listen can reduce feelings of loneliness and help foster a sense of purpose.

Mental stimulation: Regular interaction with others, whether through conversation, activities, or shared hobbies, helps stimulate the brain, improving memory and cognitive function. A sense of engagement keeps the mind active and sharp, which is particularly important for those at risk of cognitive decline.

Physical activity: Companionship often leads to increased physical activity. Whether it's walking, participating in a hobby or simply moving around to chat, which is vital for maintaining mobility and strength.

Sense of belonging: Companionship provides a sense of community and belonging, which can be particularly important for older adults who no longer have the daily interactions they once had in their working life or social circles. Feeling connected to others contributes to greater overall happiness and life satisfaction.

How to beat isolation

There are a number of simple steps that can help to reduce the impact of isolation during the winter months, such as:

Home Visits: If you or a family member cannot be present with your loved one every day, consider professional home care. Our carers are trained to provide and can offer social interaction, help with activities of daily living and provide peace of mind for family members. Our carers often form meaningful relationships with their clients, offering not just physical support but also emotional comfort.

Social activities: We often encourage participation in local community groups or activities designed for older adults. Many areas offer social clubs, fitness classes or creative workshops aimed at keeping seniors active and connected. Having the help of a carer to get ready for and attend these events can be really beneficial.

Technology: This can be a great way to connect the people you care for with other individuals and activities that give them a sense of community.

Regular check-ins: Scheduling regular phone or video calls to check in on their wellbeing can be key if you aren't able to always visit them in person. Consistency and routing in staying connected can make a big difference to a person's life.

We understand that the emotional and physical wellbeing of older adults is closely tied to the connections they maintain with others.

Our team is here to support families in ensuring that their loved ones not only have the care they need but also the companionship that fosters a sense of belonging, reduces isolation and promotes overall health.

Whether through professional companion care or practical suggestions for staying engaged, we are committed to helping your loved ones remain connected, active and fulfilled throughout the winter months.



The importance of footwear for older adults

The humble shoe and its impact on our ability to move freely should not be underestimated.

Footwear plays a vital role in preventing slips, trips, and falls, which are a major concern for older adults, particularly during winter months when conditions like snow, ice and rain increase the risk of accidents.

We often advise the people we care for and their family on appropriate footwear that helps people in care maintain their independence. Here are some top tips from our experience care team:

- **Look for non-slip soles:** Shoes or slippers with non-slip soles are essential for preventing slips, especially on icy or wet surfaces.
- **High ankle shoes:** Although there is a temptation to look for a low-cut shoe to help loved ones get dressed, ankle support is critical to giving your loved one's surer footing. Shoes with a low ankle increase the likelihood of injuries should a trip, slip or fall occur.
- **Warmth:** Insulated boots or slippers with thick linings help to keep feet warm. Cold feet can increase the risk of circulation problems or exacerbate existing health conditions like arthritis.
- **Proper fit:** Shoes that are too tight or too loose can increase the risk of falls. Many people foot shape and size change as they age, so ensure the shoes provide a snug fit without restricting circulation.
- **Avoid high heels:** High heels or shoes with a narrow base increase the risk of ankle twists and falls. Opt for shoes with a low, wide heel or flat shoes.
- **Orthopaedic options:** If your loved one has foot problems, look for shoes designed for orthotic insoles, which can offer better support and comfort.
- **Look and feel:** Make sure your loved one feels empowered to wear footwear that they like the look and feel of. If you buy them shoes purely on practicality, it increases the chance that they don't wear them and opt for something less suitable.

Choosing the right shoe may seem like quite a benign step to be taking, but it could have a big impact on the life of the person you care for.



Keeping your home warm and safe in winter

For people who receive care at home, staying warm and safe throughout winter is essential.

Cold weather can make existing health conditions worse, increase the risk of falls and make day-to-day living more difficult. Taking practical steps can make a real difference to comfort, wellbeing and safety.

Maintain a steady indoor temperature

We know that the rising energy costs have forced many people to be more careful with their use of heating, but it is a really important aspect of maintaining your loved one's health.

Poorly heated homes are often damper, which increases the potential of respiratory conditions. Aim to keep the main living areas at around 18 – 21 degrees.

Rather than turning the heating on and off, a steady temperature helps people stay warm without sudden changes that can cause chills or affect circulation.

Reduce draughts

Simple measures, such as draught excluders, sealing gaps around windows and using thick curtains can help keep warm air in and cold air out. Closing curtains as soon as daylight fades also helps to retain heat.

Use heating safely

Portable electric heaters can be helpful, but they must be used with care. Keep them well away from bedding, curtains and furniture, and make sure they are switched off when not in use. Never use gas hobs or open ovens for heating.

Warm clothing and layers

Ensure your loved one wears several thin layers helps to trap heat more effectively than one heavy layer. Thermal socks, slippers with good grip and fleece blankets make a noticeable difference, especially for people who spend longer periods sitting.

Safe use of electric blankets

Electric blankets can be useful, but only if used correctly. They should be checked regularly for wear and tear, never used with hot water bottles and should be turned off before sleeping unless they are designed to stay on overnight.

Keep pathways and entrances safe

Cold weather increases the risk of slips. Ensure outdoor steps, paths and driveways are gritted or cleared where possible. Indoors, remove trip hazards such as loose rugs and ensure hallways and landings are well lit.

Stay stocked up

Bad weather can make it harder to pop out for essentials. Keeping a small supply of tinned food, long-life milk, medicines and warm drinks helps ensure that your loved one can stay indoors safely during very cold spells.

Check home safety equipment

Winter is a good time to ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly. If the home has fires or a gas boiler, make sure they have been serviced by a qualified professional.

Keep in touch

Isolation can increase during cold weather, so regular check-ins are important. Whether through family visits, carers or neighbours, knowing someone will be popping in provides reassurance and early intervention if something seems amiss.

A warm and safe home environment is vital for anyone receiving care, particularly in winter.

Taking these simple steps helps reduce risks and allows your loved one to stay comfortable, supported and secure throughout the colder months.

Our credentials

We are proud to hold a number of credential and awards that demonstrate the high quality of care we provide.

HomeCare.co.uk

We achieved a Review Score of 10 out of 10 based on reviews in the last few years. Overall, we have more 60 reviews from those who value our services and support.

Awards

We have won or been shortlisted for numerous awards in the last few years, including:

Top 20 Home Care Providers in West Midlands 2025	Registered Care Manager of the Year – Winner 2025	Home Care Employer Award – Winner 2024	Family Business of the Year – Finalist 2024
Employer of the Year – Finalist 2024	Community Unsung Hero Award – Finalist 2024	SLTC Small Business of the Year – Finalist 2025	Accountancy & Tax Award – Finalist 2024
Thirty Under 30 Award – Winner 2023	Business Initiative of the Year – Finalist 2023	Community Service Dignity Champion 2023	Leadership Win Social Care – Finalist 2023

The Care Quality Commission

Nexus Care Services was marked as Good in all areas in an inspection by the Care Quality Commission. The rigorous inspection by the care sector watch dog marked our care company as good across all areas which they inspected, noting we are safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

How we can help you

We hope you have found this practical guide useful. Winter bring many new challenges, not only for the people you care for, but also for you.

We know choosing to bring in additional care can be an emotional and potentially confusing process, but with the right care plan in place you can ensure that your loves ones stay safe at home.

Our award-winning team of carers in Sutton Coldfield, Lichfield and Tamworth have years of experience helping people throughout the year, including the additional requirements that come during winter.

We are able to provide carefully tailored care assessments within 24 hours and endeavour to start providing care within seven days.

To find out how we can help you, please get in touch with us.

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