



# Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

## SOCIAL OUTCOMES



## London Borough of Lewisham

### A warm welcome for all: tackling the cost-of-living crisis.

Coming out of a pandemic, with a looming cost of living crisis and rising inflation, we knew that Lewisham communities would find it tough, especially as they tend to trend below the London average. Research told us that four out of ten Lewisham households were in fuel or food poverty, with local food banks seeing a 400% rise in referrals with falling donations. We could see an increase in payment arrears and debt and, locally, a rise in Universal Credit claimants. New vulnerable groups emerged that hadn't previously been considered at risk, and nearly three out of 10 Lewisham residents reported high anxiety levels.

Through our Local Strategic Partnership, we worked with our partner [Lewisham Local](#), to deliver a small grants programme providing warm spaces and outreach activities to help people navigate the cost of living crisis and ensure they know how to access support and not feel isolated. The grants were worth a total of £65,000 and were distributed to 25 spaces to enhance/enable their winter offer. Following the success of this Warm Welcomes programme, a further £74,000 was identified to fund additional social prescribing, community transport, and outreach advice to support the hubs in offering more to residents.

The project team at Lewisham Local (Four officers sharing a full-time role) worked collaboratively with the council's cost-of-living programme manager, plus three members of the council's Insight and Delivery team, to coordinate monitoring, communications, and evaluation.

## Objectives

Our objectives were to reach 10,000 residents (measured by attendance) and for residents to feel supported, knowing that the Council and its partners were ensuring they were not left behind. This was measured by qualitative feedback, pulse surveys and comments from volunteers/library staff, which demonstrated that the programme fulfilled its objectives.

**What are Warm Welcomes?**

Lewisham Libraries and Community groups have come together to offer Warm Welcome spaces where people can pop in free of charge. All welcomes are currently different, days and times. Some may be providing hot drinks, others may be providing hot food, others may be providing social activities and additional support. Many local community groups have independently set up their own Warm Welcomes and some are working in partnership around local areas. Lewisham Local is working with partners to map and promote the Warm Spaces and provide additional wrap-around support. Partners include Lewisham Council, Age UK Lewisham & Southwark and Citizens Advice Lewisham.

**How do I find what I need?**

Browse by area or find the different types of offers you are looking for. Check these icons to see what each space offers.

- HOT DRINKS
- ACTIVITIES
- FOOD
- SIGNPOSTING

**How do I get there?**

See where each place is on the map to find the nearest station, or call Transport for London to find the bus route at 0343 222 1234.

**Other Useful Links**

- Community Connections Lewisham 7340554864 [communityconnectionslewisham.org](https://www.communityconnectionslewisham.org)
- citizens advice Lewisham 7340554864 [citizensadvicelewisham.org.uk](https://citizensadvicelewisham.org.uk)
- SOUTH EAST LONDON COMMUNITY ENERGY 7340554864 [selce.org.uk](https://selce.org.uk)

**Contact information:**

Website: <https://www.lewishamlocal.com/lewisham-warm-spaces/>  
Email: [warmwelcomes@lewishamlocal.com](mailto:warmwelcomes@lewishamlocal.com)  
Phone: 0208 488 9224

Lewisham Local [www.lewishamlocal.com](https://www.lewishamlocal.com)  
Charity Number 1101616 | Company Number 4681564

South East London  
 Lewisham  
 LEWISHAM LOCAL

## Co-producing with our partners – a direct impact on positive outcomes

The approach to 'Warm Welcomes' was to bring Strategic Partnership members' plans and ideas around 'warm spaces' together and support partners to promote their own spaces and initiatives using a joint, borough-wide brand.

We wanted people to feel welcome and avoid potential stigma around the use of 'warm spaces', acknowledging that many people might be accessing Council services of this nature for the first time. We also knew that we couldn't do it alone, so we looked to a partnership model to approach this challenge.

The programme's success was enhanced by buy-in from the Strategic Partnership, who were key to sharing the offer widely, using marketing collateral and signposting. 25 voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners could access small grants to extend their offer, and

another 25 stepped up voluntarily with no additional funding, creating a network of 50 spaces. This amounted to 11,355 hours donated over the three months as warm spaces, or the equivalent of £31,000 worth of heating!

The Warm Welcomes partnership facilitated improved connections between services and fostered a network of learning, sharing best practices and cross-referrals between the hubs, local authorities, and other VCS services. This network has extended beyond the Warm Welcomes programme and continues to be used to share information across the community.

One of the most demonstrable successes is that the evaluation carried out for the 2022-23 programme, particularly the positive effect on people's mental health, led to the local Mental Health Alliance advocating for Integrated Care Board funding to enable us to rerun the programme for the 2023-24 winter.

This year, we have built on feedback and are evolving the offer to include co-location between Warm Welcomes and various services, such as mental health support, our local 'Bank of Things', advice, and social prescribing. All of this has helped residents better connect with the support offers available in Lewisham, providing value for money for the Council.

The success of the Warm Welcomes partnership has formed the blueprint for our Essentials Goods grant scheme, which was launched in August 2023. This is another small grant programme to enable community partners to purchase essential items for residents, where the item will make a key difference in the resident's life, but where they don't have the means to purchase it themselves, for example, bikes for transport to work, white goods, ID documentation, essential uniforms.

Further evaluation is showing us this strategic approach is working. Between October 2022 and March 2023 we saw an uplift of 29% in visits to our dedicated webpage and an increase of 30 seconds on dwell time. By monitoring click-throughs and heat mapping the page, we have responded to resident needs by tailoring our offer and strengthening elements of the partnership, which we know is in demand.

Over 18,000 residents have accessed our warm spaces and engaged with the partnerships' support programme, exceeding our target of 10,000. Regarding value for money, it costs us only 8p per resident to act and visit a warm space and access support.

Our qualitative evaluation told us that 84% of visitors found the spaces helped them feel more connected and reduced social isolation. This was corroborated through interviews with several residents who visited the spaces. One lady was very open about her experiences, attributing her attendance at a local Warm Welcome to alleviating her suicidal thoughts. Just incredible!



**For further information contact:**

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