



BERWICKSHIRE WARM SPACES PROJECT EVALUATION

**Warm Spaces: A Community Response to
the Cost-of-Living Crisis**

March 2023




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A Warm Welcome

A few months ago, a new expression emerged in communities: “warm spaces”, “warm banks” and “warm hubs”. The worsening cost-of-living crisis, exacerbated by high energy and food prices, the conflict in Ukraine, and the pandemic, meant that months later, libraries, places of worship, village halls and community centres have opened their doors to support people across communities through this hard, expensive winter. The reasons for attending warm spaces varied, with some seeing it as a place to keep warm, others looking for advice, but many wanting to socialise. To avoid stigma, a variety of activities have been arranged such as coffee mornings, children's

crafts, pantries and board games clubs. Through this experience, we learned that warm spaces are likely to continue, though morphing into something else such as social community spaces. The term ‘warm welcome’ appealed to many as it is both relevant to warm spaces now, but also as a welcoming neighbourhood warmth, so much needed in a world post-covid.

Many thanks to Scottish Borders Council and the National Lottery for providing funds and to more than 100 volunteers who made it all happen!

Juliana Amaral
Bavs Chief Executive
Officer

A Coordinated Response

At the end of summer 2022, community groups, volunteers and third sector organisations contacted BAVS to express a real concern regarding the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on many people across communities.

Increased demand on already stretched food banks, community larders and further pressure on Citizen's Advice support were all an indication that the winter was going to pose real challenges for many people across Berwickshire. Working closely with organisations and communities, with this in mind, a coordinated approach was developed.

Funding

Bavs liaised with Scottish Borders Council through the Cost-of-Living crisis fund to secure initial investment. A match fund was obtained from The National Lottery resulting in over £43K to be distributed via a microgrant scheme across Berwickshire.



Respect, dignity, and warmth

The full impact of warm spaces and whether they were as needed as we thought is starting to emerge. The first learning from this type of response came from the Berwickshire Alliance Dignity in Food framework which formed the basis for the Warm Spaces fund criteria, such as:

- Offer food that has “social value”, that is food that we would ourselves want to eat.
- Avoid assumptions around people’s food preferences.
- Encourage ordinary places - deliver services as far as possible in spaces that are welcoming and not stigmatised.
- Support extensions of current community lunches and social food activities.
- Provide warm spaces through the delivery of socially valued activity: people stay warm and get food while engaging in socially valued activities.
- Encourage partnership working to make the most of all our organisation’s networks and capabilities.
- Fund projects with clearly defined boundaries and outcomes and promoting engagement with partners to deliver services, advice and expertise according to their scope.



More than just warm spaces

The first part of BAVS work was strategic, helping the voluntary sector to secure resources to respond to crisis. The second element was to ensure they had all the policies they needed, providing advice and training on safeguarding, risk assessment and food hygiene.

What

Every warm space was different and so were the activities provided. The reasons for attending warm spaces varied, with some seeing it as a place to keep warm, others looking for advice, but many wanting to socialise.

Where and When

A coordinated approach ensured that there was no duplication of effort: each warm space complemented each other and were open different days/times, thus maximising attendance.

How

Building capacity in communities meant that these projects offered a wider set of support, helping people through a very difficult winter and making sure they were not alone.

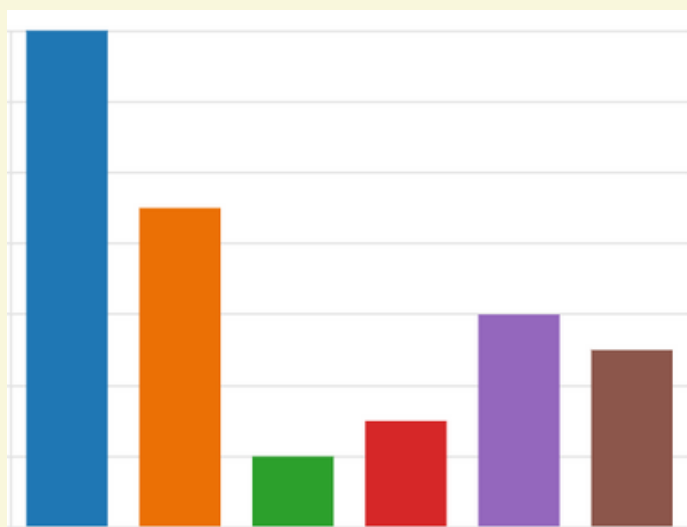


People and places

A total of 16 spaces in Berwickshire benefited from the small grant between November 22-March 23. The coordinated approach ensured that there was no duplication, so those who wanted to attend other warm spaces in neighbouring communities could benefit from more offers through the week. Every space was unique and led by local people.



- Older people
- Children and families
- Ethnic minority groups
- Faith community
- Young people
- Other



210

sessions delivered between
Nov 22-Mar 23



4005

people attended the warm
spaces



108

volunteers



10

paid staff

Why it matters?

William is a man in his late 60's who lives alone in social housing. Before Covid, he had a major stroke and unfortunately now has impaired walking and other motor skills issues. William enjoys the company within the warm space and looks forward to his weekly trip. A table of people with common interests was formed where childhood endeavours are shared and fondly remembered! There's a lot of laughter from this table!

What people said

It doesn't have to be someone we know - just someone to talk to - talk about the weather/tv programmes/family etc

I used to just come along myself and now I have people to meet and talk to. I really enjoy it

Having a buddy and mentor who was a similar age helped them to get over feeling scared or worried and it helped to see that they were not alone.

It's great it is to have the the Brunch Hub, as it's the only time I get out

Being able to get a hot cup of coffee and take some groceries away. the hub has allowed them to save a bit of money that way

A meal and weekly social interaction has been greatly valued as I struggles with mental health and feel the pinch of the cost of living increases.

Although there's a lot of need around food and finances, companionship was equally important, there's a lot of lonely or isolated individuals and families.

People are much more likely to use facilities like the Pantry at the if they are convinced that they are taking surplus food that would otherwise go to landfill.

What went well

- Partnerships were formed + more people supported (i.e.: LAC service, Alzheimers Scotland, BHA Befriend etc.).
- Approximately 45 children, all from social housing, benefitted from a square meal after school, which closes early on Fridays, also playing board games and cards together afterwards.
- There is a greater need for a warm hub, social get-together and support during this cost of living crisis than was originally anticipated.
- Some volunteers benefitted from the provisions as much as the people attending.
- Quite a few of those who attended live alone and have health conditions/mobility restrictions. From general conversations among those attending came ideas for future events to hold at the village hall, including a display of photographs and film of the village and its residents throughout the past several decades.






Lessons learned

- Financial support is fundamental to enable community activism.
- Transport is a huge barrier.
- Having a buddy and mentor of a similar age helps people to get over feeling scared or worried and it helped to see that they are not alone.
- Consideration on venue and opening hours as well as what is being offered.
- A mix of activity offered was important.
- Flexibility in format and delivery, support existing activities and offer additional where gaps are identified.
- A walk-in facility where people in need can choose their own food offers dignity and moves away from the stigma attached to food banks.
- Joint learning would be beneficial, some spaces were better at publicity than others.
- A pay as you feel model could also work well.
- A mix of volunteers and paid staff is required to avoid burnout and make activities in communities long-lasting.

BERWICKSHIRE HUBS AND PARTNERS

Berwickshire Hubs

-  Ayton Community Cafe - Ayton Bowling Club
-  Eat, Sleep & Ride - Lamberton
-  Warm Hub - Coldstream Community Centre
-  Warm Wednesdays - Chirnside Community Centre
-  Winter Warmers -Leitholm Village Hall
-  St Abbs Drop-In, The Ebba Centre, St Abbs
-  Links Warm Space - Tides Reach, Eyemouth
-  Soup and a roll - Duns Golf Club, Duns
-  Cafe/ Pantry Warm Space - Volunteer Hall, Duns
-  Warm Place British legion Club Coldstream
-  Birgham Community Lunch - Birgham Village Hall
-  Burnmouth Warm Hub - Burnmouth Village Hall
-  Whitsome Warm Space - Ark, Whitsome
-  Tea & Toast at Eyemouth Parish Church
-  Warm Hub Soup and cake lunch - Reston Village Hall
-  Splash Brunch Hub, Eyemouth Community Centre

Partnerships

- Options Understood - training
- Paths for all walk leader SBC
- Richard Keech and Dialouge - musicians
- Chirnside Community Larder
- Chirnside Development Group
- Morrisons' Berwick
- Marks & Spencer
- Berwickshire Swap
- Reston Food Larder
- Splash
- Eyemouth Rotary
- Ayton & District Churches
- Ayton Primary School
- Ayton & District Bowling Club
- Greenvale Potatoes
- Duns Food Bank
- Befriend Berwickshire
- Berwickshire Housing Association
- Burnmouth Community Council
- The Church of Scotland
- Coldstream Larder
- St Abbs Community Trust
- Alzheimers Scotland
- Eyemouth Larder with Community Fridge
- Abundant Borders
- SBC Local Area Coordination team



THANK YOU



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*BAVS was a partner in the Borders
Third Sector Interface until the end of
March 2023*

