



# Warm Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees

Feedback report – June 2023

## **Background**

Prior to the compiling of this June 2023 report, an interim update was sought from venues in February 2023 which is summarised in these key findings:

- Vast majority of venues were confident they understood the support that is available for residents locally, and how to signpost/refer into these services, listed at the online [Cost of Living Hub](#) and in the printed leaflet version
- Some had experienced little to no take-up so were trialling different opening times to monitor any changes
- A consensus that the ability to offer activities would boost attendance; this anecdotal evidence was backed up by marked increase of people at specific sessions such as toddler clubs and meal offers
- ARC's family cinema sessions averaged 122 people per screening on Saturday afternoons throughout December 2022 and January 2023
- The number of venues who said they would benefit from outreach from the following organisations were: CAB (20), SBC Welfare Rights (21), SBC Learning & Skills [functional skills] (16), SBC Employment & Training Hub (17), SBC Housing (18), Local social housing providers (18), SBC Home Improvement Agency (20), SBC Homelessness Team (15), Stockton Food Power Network (20), PCP Community Wellbeing Champions (15), Mental Health & Wellbeing Services (21)
- The four Family Hubs and all Libraries are best placed with links to the above services already in place and 16 venues requested no outreach contact
- 18 venues would welcome SBC Learning & Skills presence to offer cooking, arts/crafts, local history sessions and 19 venues requested activities from the SBC Community Engagement team that combat social isolation
- 12 venues are interested in receiving food hygiene training
- When offered the chance to add comments, venues' feedback covered issues like future funding, the need for activities and increased promotion

These findings were understood and reviewed as a foundation to the action plan associated with this report. Consultation visits were conducted throughout April and May 2023 to expand on these issues and further the two-way feedback between the Council as lead coordinators of the scheme and the venues delivering on the frontline.

Details of the active directory and more information is located at [www.stockton.gov.uk/warm-spaces](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/warm-spaces)

### **Feedback responses and highlighted issues**

Information was collected from 45 venues (see appendix 3), predominantly via face-to-face meetings. This represents a 76% response rate from active venues (59) on the scheme. Again, it is worth noting that people attending a Warm Spaces venue are at no point asked to indicate their reason for being there so the feedback gathered is largely qualitative and anecdotal.

The key findings and highlighted issues are:

- There is a significant desire for outreach activities and support services to be brought into venues where possible including food hygiene training, Learning & Skills classes, all manner of activities to foster hobbies and combat social isolation, drop-in sessions from the CAB/Welfare Rights Team/Housing/Employment & Training Hub/Homelessness/Stockton Food Power Network, PCP Community Wellbeing Champions, and Mental Health & Wellbeing Services colleagues
- 32 responding venues have also expressed an interest in becoming a Safe Space
- There is a risk of losing venues from the scheme if they do not feel sufficiently supported in terms of promotion, added value from activities/support services and lack of funding
- A general rise in attendance during the worst of the winter weather with an expected fall back to previous levels throughout the Spring but a constant core of people attending regularly across most venues
- The label 'Warm Spaces' may not be helpful in terms of its associated stigma for those who need to attend venues solely open for the scheme and attendance in warmer weather may be negatively affected if people misunderstand what is being offered
- Poverty in many aspects including food insecurity are significant problems across the Borough

- Social isolation, loneliness and associated mental health problems are also key areas of concern
- Some venues report supporting people who may not have the capacity to help themselves sufficiently including those with a learning disability
- The Warm Spaces venues have quickly become established and in some cases essential places for vulnerable people to go in their community
- Accessibility to venues for people with disabilities and/or living in rural areas remains of concern despite the Community Transport offer available

### **Case studies and video**

#### ***‘JD’, a lady over 60 who lives alone and is dependent on benefits:***

JD heard from a friend about the cooking sessions available at Norton Grange Community Centre and attended alone. She was partnered with a lady in her 30s and they enjoyed each other’s company, subsequently attending the community pantry and lunch club the next day. They have continued to attend weekly to access low-cost and free food as well as enjoying a chat.

JD disclosed that she looks forward to the Wednesday sessions as it is the only time of the week she leaves her house and socialises, saying: “Everyone is lovely and friendly here and, honestly, I get lonely so I am glad this here. I struggle with my mental health but the food is lovely, I’ve made new friends...I am so glad I found out about all this.”

#### ***‘PM’ a lady over 60 with mental health issues:***

PM disclosed she is on medication to help with her mental health issues. Having previously been a school cook, PM was glad to be invited to a cooking session where she received a slow cooker and casserole cookbook free of charge. She believes this has saved her money on energy bills. Staff learnt she needed financial support and referred her to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who have assisted with her immediate and longer-term issues, going “above and beyond” in her words. PM is regularly helped with emergency food parcels when the CAB are working on complex financial issues that can’t be resolved overnight.

It came to light that some of PM's financial issues stemmed from supporting family members, who have since been offered supported and referred to services such as the Stockton-on-Tees Active Travel Hub as they were eligible for a free bike. PM has also been helped by Thirteen's Hardship Fund. PM said: "This community pantry and lunch club really is a godsend; I don't know how I would manage without it most weeks."

### ***'Wayne' at Norton Grange's Community Pantry***

Wayne is a single man in his 30s who depends on benefits and cares for his three children between Friday and Sunday each week, and regularly through school holidays. He lives in private rented accommodation which he struggles to afford and has severe mental health problems. Wayne has disclosed that he often does not eat for a few days to ensure he has enough food in stock for when his children visit over the weekend. He attends the pantry each week and regularly receives an emergency food parcel.

Staff have referred him to the CAB for financial support and advice. To aid his mental health, they have also facilitated access to training via Three13 and volunteer sessions to improve green spaces at St Michael's Church in Norton. Wayne has also been referred to the Green Doctor to receive emergency funds to get his energy supply reinstated at home.

Wayne said: "I've never received any support before and didn't know what help was out there, so I'm very grateful for the support that has been given to me." The CAB are currently working towards a personal independence payment award for Wayne which would improve his situation, alongside seeking more affordable housing.

### ***'T' at Low Grange Community Centre:***

T first attended the centre in December 2022, and she suffers from social anxiety and other health problems. She finds the centre very comfortable and welcoming. She has subsequently joined the craft group and regularly volunteers for Billingham Environmental Link Project (BELP) which has boosted her confidence significantly. T supports the Warm Spaces group, recently facilitating a seeded paper making workshop for attendees.

T welcomes people into the centre and helps to serve refreshments. Alongside another volunteer, she also runs a monthly car boot sale where any profits go back into the community to support children living in Low Grange. She is involved in setting up a project named Low Grange Children's Activity Group which intends to offer activities during the school holidays that are inclusive to all. Staff are delighted to report she has gone from strength to strength.

- Redhill Family Hub have been supporting a woman who lost her teenage daughter with a referral to CRUSE counselling support, and she now engages with the hub for other activities. They have helped others access mental health support
- A Rivers of Life attendee said: "I have been able to meet people, make friends and feel welcomed after being isolated. I think the help the church offers is very important to those who are homeless or have addiction problems in Stockton."
- At Stockton Salvation Army, they gained a volunteer from someone initially attending a Warm Spaces session. They have a child with autism, but they are currently waiting for housing in Stockton while living in Darlington. The child and adult are provided with the taxi fare to get to school but the parent was hanging around in Stockton during the day before being directed to the Salvation Army.
- St Paul's Church said: "We have lone parents come to our Warm Spaces toddler group who have share how it has been a lifeline, helping them to link up with other parents and carers in the same situation which can be a lonely and isolated place to be."
- The Place to Be (Starfish) said: "A suicidal man came to one of our sessions and spoke about his problems. These included not being able to afford the rising energy costs, food prices and trouble getting the medication he needs locally. He was supported and referred to the CAB to maximise his income and they set up a safety plan for him and his wife. The man reports feeling happier thanks to help and continues to visit regularly."
- Stockton Hope at St Andrew's Methodist Church said: "A young man who struggles being at home alone comes to the venue and it really helps his mental health. We managed to get him a bike so he can travel here more easily. Lots of our visitors benefit from coming to combat loneliness."



- St Peter’s Church said: “A lady who visits us lives in sheltered accommodation has been coming since we started on the scheme. The session also makes a huge difference for residents of our local care home, it’s broken down the barriers so we can go to support them there and give them that important interaction.”
- The Willows Centre said: “A local resident with five children regularly visits the venue and has since had a DBS done so she can volunteer with our youth club.”

A video has been produced by the Council and partner organisations which showcases the community and individual impact of Warm Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees. You can watch the video [here](#).



### **Recommendations for consideration**

The FSOT team, along with key stakeholders including its project group with partners, will review and implement where agreed the following recommendations:

- Consider ‘rebranding’ the scheme to be named ‘*Community Spaces – with a warm welcome...*’ to reflect the year-round provision of not just heated public places in colder weather but also community interaction and access to services
- Implement the associated Action Plan with venues and partner organisations while retaining flexibility to adapt to new and changing circumstances with

particular focus on developing added value from these venues as essential community hubs offering various provision and support for vulnerable people

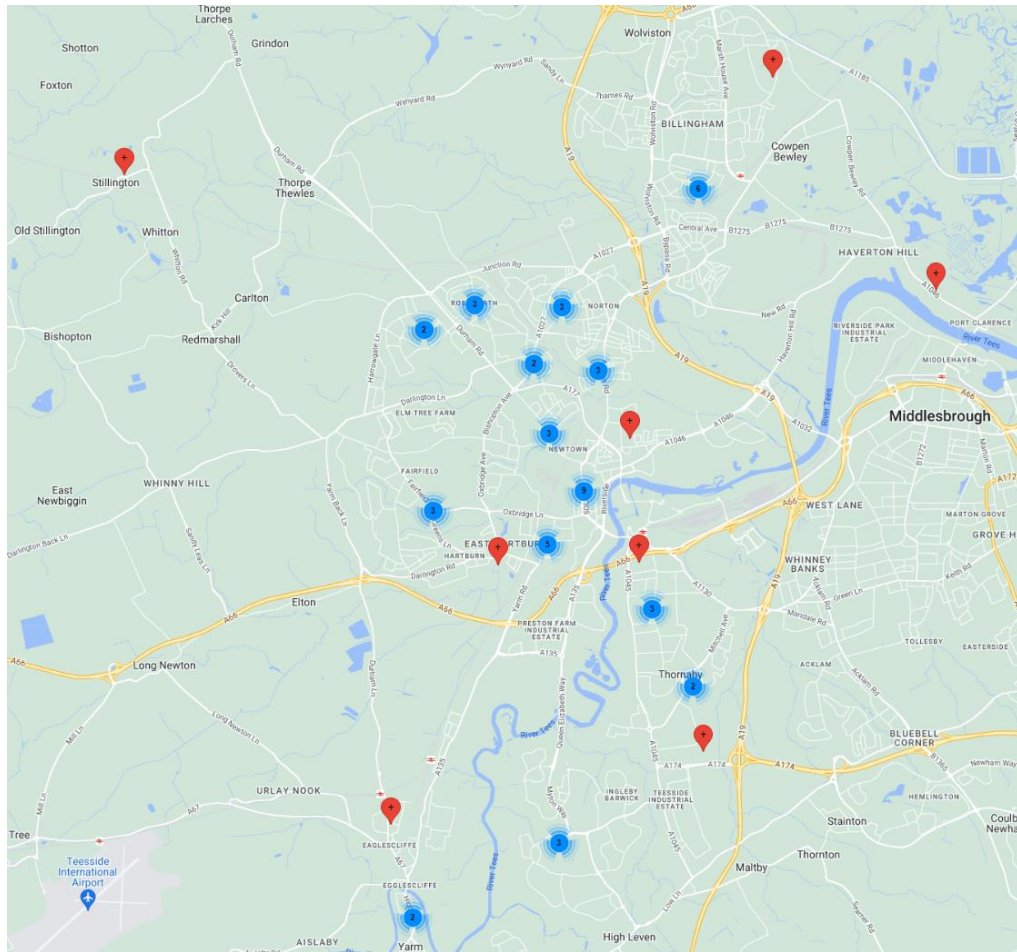
- To develop the appropriate venues to host holistic support and services encompassing health, housing, welfare, police/community enforcement, NHS, education and employment and associated elements in a coordinated programme that maximises benefit for services providing outreach that is focussed in areas and on days/times that suits those visiting those venues
- To maximise the value of our Libraries and Family Hubs as 'best placed' to deliver targeted support as participating venues
- To work with partners to investigate developing Community Transport in the Borough to improve accessibility to venues on the scheme
- To explore developing Safe Spaces at venues who are open to providing this extra element
- To explore and promote funding opportunities for participating venues to encourage them to remain on the scheme, ensuring they continue to be regularly shared from partners such as Catalyst, alongside SBC consideration of direct funding as we approach next winter
- A greater push from SBC communications team to promote the various aspects of the scheme's offer



## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Map of Warm Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees (as of 2 June 2023)



#### Location

- [Ingleby Barwick \(3\)](#)
- [Billingham \(3\)](#)
- [Eaglescliffe \(1\)](#)
- [Grangefield \(1\)](#)
- [Hardwick \(1\)](#)
- [Norton \(5\)](#)
- [Stillington \(1\)](#)
- [Stockton Centre \(18\)](#)
- [Stockton North \(4\)](#)
- [Thornaby \(8\)](#)
- [Yarm \(2\)](#)
- [Fairfield \(1\)](#)
- [Hartburn \(2\)](#)
- [Port Clarence \(1\)](#)

## Appendix 2

### List of participating venues in Warm Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees by ward (correct as of 2 June 2023)

59 venues across 27 wards – 23 wards covered (85%) / 4 wards uncovered (15%)

- **Billingham Central (4)** – Billingham Family Hub, Billingham Forum, Billingham Library, Café in the Park (John Whitehead Park)
- **Billingham East (2)** – Low Grange Community Centre, St Columba's Church
- **Billingham North (0)**
- **Billingham South (1)** – High Clarence Primary School
- **Billingham West and Wolviston (0)**
- **Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree (1)** – Aspen Gardens
- **Eaglescliffe East (1)** – Tees Valley Community Church
- **Eaglescliffe West (2)** – Egglecliffe Community Centre, The Wilson Centre (Long Newton)
- **Fairfield (2)** – Fairfield Library, The Grangefield Centre
- **Grangefield (0)**
- **Hardwick and Salters Lane (1)** – Stockton Hope at St Andrew's Methodist Church
- **Hartburn (2)** – Greens Lane Methodist Church, West End Bowling Club
- **Ingleby Barwick North (1)** – The Rings Community Hub
- **Ingleby Barwick South (2)** – All Saints Academy, Ingleby Barwick Library
- **Mandale and Victoria (3)** – Teesside Vineyard Church, The Community Hub, Thornaby Pool
- **Newtown (3)** – Newtown Community Resource Centre, St John The Baptist Church, St Paul's Church

- **Northern Parishes (1)** – Stillington Village Hall
- **Norton Central (4)** – Frederick Nattrass Centre (Tees Valley Music Service), Norton Grange Community Centre, Norton Library, Norton Methodist Church
- **Norton North (1)** – The Glebe Community Centre
- **Norton South (1)** – Christ Church Mission
- **Ropner (5)** – Parkfield Lighthouse Limited, St Peter's Church, Stockton Family Hub, Yarm Road Methodist Church, The Place To Be (Starfish)
- **Roseworth (4)** – Ragworth Community Centre, Redhill Family Hub, Roseworth Library, St Chad's Church
- **Southern Villages (0)**
- **Stainsby Hill (4)** – Eltham Community Centre, Thornaby Central Library, Thornaby Family Hub, Thornaby Library (Gilmour Street)
- **Stockton Town Centre (10)** – ARC, Lakota Hub, Roseberry Community Consortium, Splash, Stockton Baptist Church, Stockton Central Library, Stockton Parish Church, Stockton Salvation Army, The Willows Centre, Rivers of Life Christian Fellowship
- **Village (1)** – Robert Atkinson Centre
- **Yarm (3)** – Challoner House Community Centre, Yarm Library, Yarm Methodist Church Hall

## Appendix 3

### List of responding venues

1. All Saints Academy
2. Aspen Gardens
3. Low Grange Community Centre
4. Billingham Forum
5. Stockton Central Library
6. Fairfield Library
7. Ingleby Barwick Library
8. Norton Library
9. Roseworth Library
10. Thornaby Library (Gilmour Street)
11. Thornaby Central Library
12. Yarm Library
13. Billingham Library
14. Café in the Park
15. Christ Church Mission
16. Community Hub, Thornaby
17. Lakota Hub
18. Parkfield Lighthouse
19. Low Grange Community Centre

20. Norton Grange Community Centre
21. Norton Methodist Church
22. Redhill Family Hub
23. Rivers of Life
24. Roseberry Community Consortium
25. Stockton Salvation Army
26. Stockton Splash
27. St Chad's Church
28. St John the Baptist Church
29. St Paul's Church
30. The Place to Be (Starfish)
31. Stockton Family Hub
32. Thornaby Family Hub
33. Stockton Baptist Church
34. The Rings Community Hub
35. Thornaby Pool
36. Frederick Nattrass Centre (TVMS)
37. West End Bowling Club
38. The Wilson Centre
39. Challoner House
40. High Clarence Primary School
41. Teesside Vineyard Church

42. St Andrew's Church

43. St Peter's Church

44. The Willows Centre

45. Yarm Methodist Church