

# Community Spaces in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees



## Annual Evaluation September 2024

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## **Executive Summary**

This report provides an overview of the Community Spaces scheme and the main issues highlighted through monitoring conversations gathered between March and June 2024. In addition, current challenges and recommended priorities for 2024/25 are outlined.

Key points to note from this report include:

- Currently, there are almost 70 venues registered as Community Spaces across the Borough. This includes all five the '*Bread and Butter Thing*' Hubs. Most venues operate throughout the year. A list of the venues is attached as appendix 2.
- 87% of Community Spaces provided a response to this year's annual monitoring. The majority stated that they were content with the scheme and would like to remain part of it for 2024-25.
- Most venues also expressed an interest in joining a Community Spaces Network. The launch of this network in June 2024 is covered within the report and indicates how feedback from monitoring conversations is already being implemented.
- Social isolation and the cost of living (struggling to pay utility and food bills) remain the two key reasons people attend a Community Space.
- Through the Community Spaces scheme, residents have accessed a range of advice and support services, such as debt management and employment and training.
- A lack of additional funding is still a key concern which prevents venues from increasing their offer to residents, i.e. opening for more days or introducing new activities.
- Several venues requested support with accessing additional funding.
- Examples of training and development opportunities requested by venues included mental health first aid, food hygiene and welfare and benefits training.
- The Winter Warm Boxes project (the distribution of boxes containing essentials to keep residents warm in their own homes) was highly regarded and all venues hoped that this would be repeated for Winter 2024/25.
- A major development within the Community Spaces scheme is the Warm Welcome. The success of the Thornaby Warm Welcome, which has resulted in the creation of a Warm Welcome in Billingham, is outlined within the report.
- Case studies from monitoring conversations, attached as appendix 1, evidence the invaluable work that has been achieved through the Community Spaces scheme.

## **Conclusion**

£60,000 of Public Health funding has secured the continuation of the Community Spaces initiative for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This has enabled venues to build on what was achieved in the first phase of the Warm Spaces scheme and work towards long-term sustainability. Considering the increasing financial pressures on local authorities and the Council's Powering Our Future transformation programme, it is imperative that Community Spaces venues are empowered to achieve this long-term sustainability by accessing wider funding and are supported with funding bid applications.

The feedback reveals that it is apparent that there is an ongoing need for residents to be supported through the Community Spaces initiative. Several case studies gathered as part of this year's monitoring process have revealed that these spaces have played a pivotal role in preventing suicide and assisting with homelessness and domestic violence. Integral to this is the commitment from providers, Council staff and partners to accurately signpost and refer members of the public to the correct services and specific contacts within those services.

Looking forward, the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) team has established a network for Community Spaces providers to sustain and improve the Community Spaces offer across the Borough. Quarterly in-person events will be organised to provide training, networking and will include guest speakers who can provide services or sessions in venues. The FSOT team also compile fortnightly emails containing information on relevant funding and events which may be of interest to Community Spaces venues. This example evidences the team's attempts to maintain ongoing dialogue with venues. FSOT staff are also willing to conduct more regular visits to venues to support their development, where there is a need.

## **Recommendations**

For the year 2024-25, it is recommended that:

1. The FSOT team, and representatives from partner organisations Thirteen and Catalyst, will assess the Community Spaces applications for 2024/25 and explore alternative options with venues who would still like to support residents, but the Community Spaces scheme is not appropriate for their venue/business model.
2. In-person quarterly Community Spaces Network events are arranged. These events will provide an opportunity for venues to come together, share ideas, be provided with updated information on funding and training. This will serve as a basis for venues to become more sustainable in line with the Council's Powering Our Futures programme.
3. Further joint working with Public Health on social isolation issues are explored.
4. Information on funding and training opportunities are regularly distributed via email to venues as part of the plan to increase the sustainability of the Community Spaces scheme.

5. Funding for Winter Warm Boxes 24/25 will be obtained by working with partner organisations, such as the Stockton and District Information and Advice Service and exploring options through Corporate Social Responsibility.
6. The FSOT and Community Engagement Team will work with Community Spaces venues to distribute Winter Warm Boxes.
7. Outreach support is provided for issues identified. For example, through work with Cleveland Police to arrange community safety drop-ins. Additional pension credit drop-ins, Employment and Training Hub on Tour sessions will also be arranged. Wider promotion of such sessions is also recommended.
8. FSOT continue to participate in Warm Welcome network and increase number of Community Spaces registered with Warm Welcome.
9. There will be increased promotion of the free SBC Community Transport Service and the Volunteer Drivers Scheme, to address transport issues for residents trying to access Community Spaces.
10. Options to ensure that there is at least one Community Space in each ward are explored.
11. Annual monitoring will take place in April 2025.

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Since its inception in 2022 (as the Warm Spaces scheme), the Community Spaces initiative has continued to develop from strength to strength, and there are currently almost 70 venues across the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. A directory of venues with contact details, opening times and facilities available is included in the [Council website](#).<sup>1</sup> These range from Council-owned buildings to churches, community centres to cafés, each offering a non-judgemental ‘warm welcome’ to residents who may be struggling with the cost of living or social isolation. A list of participating venues is also included in this report as Appendix 2.

The screenshot shows the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council website's Community Spaces Directory. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Our Council', 'Our People', 'Our Places', and 'Our Economy' tabs. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Search Community Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees' and a 'Search' button. To the right of the search bar is a 'Refine your results' sidebar with two sections: 'Facilities' and 'Location'. The 'Facilities' section lists: 'Access to a kitchen with full facilities (2)', 'Accessible Entrance (64)', 'Accessible Toilets (60)', 'Activities (16)', and 'Advice and Support (14)'. The 'Location' section lists: 'Ingleby Barwick (3)', 'Billingham (3)', 'Egglecliffe (2)', 'Grangefield (1)', 'Hardwick (1)', and 'Norton (8)'. Below the search bar, there are two venue listings. The first is 'All Saints CE Academy' with facilities: 'Hot and cold refreshments, reading materials, accessible entrance, accessible toilets and free car parking'. Its address is 'Blair Avenue, Ingleby Barwick, TS17 5BL' and phone number is '01642 654650'. The second is 'ARC, Stockton Arts Centre' with facilities: 'Accessible entrance, free Wi-Fi, charging facilities, accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, able to bring own food and drinks, hot and cold refreshments available for purchase and activities'. Its address is '60 Dovecot Street, Stockton, TS18 1LL' and phone number is '01642 525199'.

1.2 This report provides an overview of the key issues highlighted through monitoring conversations gathered between March and June 2024. This is accompanied by a series of case studies to emphasise the continuing importance of the Community Spaces scheme to the Borough’s residents. Finally, the report concludes with an evaluation of the current challenges and recommended priorities for the year ahead.

<sup>1</sup> <https://stockton.gov.uk/community-spaces-directory>

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 Several areas within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees are categorised as the most deprived in the country, meaning that the increasing cost of living has had a significantly detrimental effect on our residents, many of whom are already impoverished.

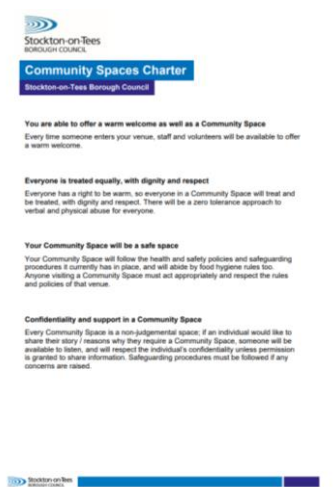
2.2 The establishment of the Warm Spaces scheme in October 2022, initially as a direct response to increasing utility bills, has provided a lifeline for a wide range of residents. Interim consultation exercises were carried out in December 2022 and February 2023 to gain early insight from venues and to serve as a mechanism for the FSOT team and partners to act on emerging issues in support of the network. An annual evaluation was carried out in June 2023. These initial evaluations revealed that the label 'Warm Spaces' may not be helpful in terms of its associated stigma for those who needed to attend venues solely open for the scheme and attendance in warmer weather may be negatively affected if people misunderstood what was being offered.

2.3 Consequently, in mid-2023, the Warm Spaces initiative was rebranded to 'Community Spaces' as a headline, using 'Community Spaces with a warm welcome' where a strapline was appropriate, to reflect the year-round provision offered that goes beyond heated public spaces to include community interaction and access to support services.

2.4 A charter has been developed that all Community Spaces venues have signed up to. The charter also outlines what is expected of any member of the public who attends.<sup>2</sup>

2.5 The newest Community Space is New Life Centre, Billingham, which also operates as a Bread and Butter Thing hub. This means that all five of the Bread and Butter Thing hubs are now also operating from Community Spaces.

2.6 Through collaboration, ongoing funding support and the tireless work of staff and volunteers across the Community Spaces venues, residents have been provided with safe spaces where they can access support, advice, socialise and often receive a warm drink and/or meal.



<sup>2</sup> [https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3696/Community-Spaces-Charter/pdf/Community\\_Spaces\\_Charter.pdf?m=1690798342227](https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3696/Community-Spaces-Charter/pdf/Community_Spaces_Charter.pdf?m=1690798342227)

### **3.0 2024 Monitoring Evaluation and Feedback**

3.1 Between March and June 2024, in-person monitoring visits were undertaken by Council officers, and staff from Catalyst and Thirteen, to gather feedback from participating venues. It was imperative that information was gathered through a conversational process so that representatives from each venue, who had given up their time to provide feedback, were reassured that they had been listened to. This has resulted in a better understanding of the successes achieved through this scheme and areas where venues need further support or advice.

3.2 58 of the 67 (87%) Community Spaces responded to the annual monitoring. A list of responding venues is included in this report as Appendix 3.

3.3 The key findings from the annual monitoring conversations are:

#### **Attendance**

3.4 Social isolation and the cost of living (struggling to pay utility and food bills) have remained the two key reasons for people to attend a Community Space, which are also viewed as a safe space and environment. For example, staff and volunteers at St Columba's Church, Billingham have observed, "*Some come just for the free homemade soup.*"

3.5 The following feedback received from Stockton Hope at St Andrew's has been echoed by most other Community Spaces venues: "*People's needs seems to have moved from food to needing social contact with others. They support each other with their problems.*"

3.6 Those attending Community Spaces have received advice and support with debt and debt management, benefits, addiction (drugs and alcohol), and welfare support, mental health problems, and employment and training. One example is the Employment and Training Hub's (E&T) 'Hub on Tour'. At these sessions, E&T Hub staff provide advice and assist with employment and training queries. To date, the 'Tour' has included or will include visits to a range of Community Spaces, including libraries and all Tees Active Leisure sites. Generally, 4-5 people are provided with assistance per session, but many residents have also taken information leaflets to pass on to family members and friends. Also, Hub staff are always open to attending any venues where there is a need.



3.7 Although there is a general increase in attendance figures during the winter months, most venues operate as a Community Space all year round. This has provided a sustained social element for residents across the Borough who rely on these spaces for friendship and support.



3.8 Several venues mentioned that attendance figures rise during school holiday times as this is a time when parents/grandparent/carers require extra support with feeding and entertaining children.

3.9 Many of the venues have existing activities or groups, such as baby and toddler sessions, which run during their Community Space 'time'.

3.10 Provision for asylum seekers and refugees has also been incorporated into the scheme and a weekly drop-in session is held at St Peter's Church, Stockton. Around 60 people attend for food, company, activities and English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes.

3.11 The provision offered varies across the venues. For example, at Tees Active leisure centre sites and the Arc, Stockton, members of the public can access a space anonymously during opening hours to simply stay warm and dry. Other venues, such as Norton Grange Community Centre, provide free weekly community meals, run a food pantry and provide emergency food parcels.

3.12 In general, venues are run by a mixture of paid staff and volunteers who prepare and serve food and serving drinks and deliver activities, such as bingo and quizzes.

3.13 With regards to why someone might not attend a Community Space, several churches responded that they felt that people might feel unsure or intimidated about entering a church or feel that they must be a Christian to access their space. Assistance with publicity to dispel these myths was requested by some churches.

3.14 Other venues stated that there was still a stigma associated with accessing a space to use services such as a foodbank. However, it appears that emphasising the social aspect of venues has reduced this stigma in places across the Borough.

3.15 One venue raised concerns that Community Spaces might be viewed as something that mainly older people accessed because they largely operate during working hours. Other venues expressed that they would like to open more but would need more funding to open on additional days.

3.16 In some areas, near Stockton Town Centre, high levels of crime were felt to be a barrier to people attending Community Spaces.

3.17 Transport was also raised as a key issue preventing people from attending a venue across the Borough, including Port Clarence and Thornaby. The following feedback from Five Lamps Warm Welcome, Thornaby highlights this problem:

*"We have an elderly couple who come from sheltered accomodation, this is their only social outlet. They can only come because we pick them up in our minibus. The male particularly has very limited mobility and can't get on the public bus. This is the highlight of his week, he comes and makes friends , plays Bingo and Dominoes. We are very sadly going to have to stop offering this service as the cost of the fuel is £30 a week. We would appreciate any support in keeping this service alive."*

3.18 Figures suggest that the SBC Community Transport scheme is being under utilised for people to access a Community Space. In April 2024, only 1 resident used the service to attend a venue, and this reduced to zero in June 2024. Further investigation into this issue needs to be conducted as a matter of urgency so that residents do not miss out on accessing a space and making important social connections if transport is the key barrier.

3.19 Efforts to resolve transport issues include the creation of the Stockton Volunteer Driver Service (SVDS). This scheme has been part-funded by SBC to recruit and coordinate volunteer drivers to give lifts to people who may be isolated or have difficulties accessing public transport. The aim of the scheme is to help reduce isolation and to increase access to social activities, support and health services. The first journey, in June 2024, took Noreen from her home in Billingham to the Warm Welcome social event in Thornaby. Noreen commented:

*'It is a marvellous thing what you are doing and an absolute godsend for me. My husband passed away in December 2023 and getting out to social events like the Warm Welcome means the world to me.'*



### **Additional Funding**

3.19 As mentioned above, funding remains a key hindrance for venues maximising the provision they can offer and the number of residents they can reach through this scheme.

3.20 Only three venues stated that they had received funding through the Council's Food Aid Fund and only one venue had received funding through Catalyst's Reducing Inequalities Fund.

3.21 Other external funds received included a £500 Red Balloons Peer Support Network bursary granted to Lighthouse Mental Health Drop-In Centre. Stockton Baptist Church had also received around £2000 from the Tees Valley Combined Authority. Newtown Resource Centre was provided with an extra £500 from Thirteen specifically to support its Community Spaces work. Therefore, there is a recognised need to work alongside Community Spaces to support them in accessing additional funding.

3.22 During the monitoring process, many churches commented on the poor condition of their buildings and their frustration at their ineligibility to access certain types of funding because of their status as a religious organisation. In response, all churches within the Community Spaces scheme were provided with information on specific funding streams for churches/religious buildings.

### **Access to Support and Advice**

3.23 The vast majority of venues had provided information on or made referrals to the following:

- Foodbanks/Community pantries
- SBC Cost of Living online hub/ Given Cost of Living Support booklet
- Citizens Advice Bureau (SDAIS)
- SBC Services- Social Care/ Housing/ Homelessness/ Welfare Support
- Mental Health Support

Revenues and Benefits advice has been provided by Council officers across several venues. Most recently, five Pension Credit Awareness Sessions have taken place during June 2024. The selected venues were: Stillington Village Hall, Thornaby Warm Welcome, West End Bowling Club, Ingleby Barwick Friendship Café, and Challoner House. There was greater engagement with the sessions at some venues, such as West End Bowling Club, who stated they would welcome another session. Other venues, such as Stillington Town Hall, stated that the single session was sufficient for their group/residents. Over 50 residents engaged with these sessions and, so far, 6 direct referrals have been made.

3.24 Positive feedback included the following example from Ingleby Barwick Friendship Café:

*“Just wanted to say a huge thank you for organising for Janet to attend our cafe yesterday. She was so lovely and I know a number of people talked with her. She fitted in beautifully, I would appreciate it if you would pass on our thanks and appreciation to her. She enjoyed the session herself so you are always all very welcome to come and join in with us. God bless you all.”*

3.25 Other examples of services and advice provided include drug sample sessions via Public Health at Rivers of Life Church, Stockton and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) drop-in sessions at the Willows Centre, Stockton.

3.26 The Diocese of Durham has also funded a Parish Nurse Project which is currently running at St Mary’s, Norton. Options to explore the expansion of this to other qualifying church venues across the Borough and to promote this to the wider public is included in the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

3.27 Many venues have provided mental health support and advice through their own organisations. Arc, Stockton offered to support wellbeing and mental health services by allowing them to use the venue to deliver services and events as this would complement existing workshops.

### **Training/ development opportunities**

3.28 The following were suggested as requests for additional training and development opportunities:

- Mental health first aid training
- Food hygiene.
- Manual handling.
- Understanding chaotic/addiction driven behaviour.
- Dementia awareness training
- Conflict management.
- Citizens Advice training
- Loneliness and social isolation training
- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Warm Boxes**

3.29 Venues praised the Warm Boxes project, remarked on the quality of items provided through this and there was a consensus that this project would be welcomed and valued again in Winter 2024. Venues were asked which items they would like to be included in Warm Boxes, if funding was available to deliver this in 2024. Suggestions included:

- Hand warmers
- hot water bottles
- blankets (including hooded blankets)
- flasks
- hygiene packs
- sleeping bags
- tents
- coats
- microwaveable heat packs
- duvet covers
- hats
- gloves.

3.30 Venues commented that Warm Boxes should be delivered earlier than the previous year, and from November onwards so boxes could be distributed before the cold weather began.

### **Community Spaces Scheme Development 2024-2025**

3.31 Most venues desired to remain a Community Space for 2024-2025 and were interested in participating in a networking event.

3.32 A handful of spaces reported that their venue had not been utilised as a Community Space or had little engagement with the scheme. One example of this was the Onsite Building Trust which oversees seven community centres across the Borough. Residents were able to access centres 24/7 but only as a place to keep warm. Through the monitoring conversation, it became apparent that, moving forward, it would be better to concentrate on two of its sites, Ragworth Community Centre and Norton Grange Community Centre. Options to explore the development of a children's soft play offer at Ragworth and to ensure the sustainability of the

community meal and pantry offer at Norton Grange are recommended for inclusion in the scheme's action plan for 2024-25.

### **Suggestions for improvements to scheme**

3.33 When asked for suggestions for improvements to the Community Spaces scheme, the main response was focused on increased promotion/advertising of spaces by the Council to attract more people and increase awareness of activities and groups on offer. This could include promotion through GP surgeries. It was also suggested that there should be a 'spotlight on a venue' in each edition of Stockton News.

## **4.0 Case Studies – The Warm Welcome**

### **4.1 The Warm Welcome at Thornaby Pavilion Indoor Bowls**



Launched in May 2023, The Warm Welcome at Thornaby Pavilion Indoor Bowls is a perfect example of the development of the Council's Warm Spaces offer into the wider Community Spaces initiative. It also provides evidence of the value of effective partnership working between the Council, the Borough's Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector (headed by Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees), Thornaby Town Council, and one of the Council's leisure, sport and wellbeing partners, Tees Active.

The weekly drop-in sessions were an instant success and provided a community service to local residents and additional funding from Thornaby Town Council has secured a continuation of the Warm Welcome sessions. As well as providing a social space for residents, events and training have also been incorporated. This includes cookery, scam awareness, and fire safety, chair-based exercises and bowling sessions. The success of the sessions at Thornaby Pavilion has led to a second venue in Thornaby, Five Lamps, running Warm Welcome sessions.

Feedback from residents emphasises the importance of the sessions:

- *It was a great atmosphere to walk into. Now it's my go to place and why I was determined to get out of the house and come today.*
- *This has got me out of a lonely space.*
- *This is one of the highlights of the week for me and my wife.*
- *I really enjoy coming here as it helps me to relax and relieve the tension.*
- *It is lovely to see friends and play games together. All for free and it gets us out and into company.*

*"We have a man who was brought to one of our sessions by a social prescriber from Mind. He was lonely and suffering from very poor mental health after losing his mum a few months prior. With no family and no friends the professional recommended Warm Welcome as a way to meet new people. He started off very quiet but Warm Welcome being the place he is, he got welcomed onto a big table of people and hes' never looked back. He now is a very active member of the Warm Welcome group, volunteers each week making drinks and talking to new people. He even goes to businesses and asks for raffle prizes and bingo prizes for the group. He is engaged and a lot happier in himself. He is looking forward to getting out with us on our first ever trip this summer."*

#### 4.2 The Warm Welcome at Billingham Forum – Launched 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Following the success of the initial Warm Welcome in Thornaby, funding was secured from Billingham Town Council and Billingham Legacy Fund to pilot a Warm Welcome in Billingham. The funding has paid for six months room hire at Billingham Forum to gauge interest and support from the local community.

Extensive publicity was undertaken in the run up to the launch session on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, this included Billingham Communities Facebook, SBC social media, Tees Active and BTC social media along with traditional leaflets and posters which were distributed to local venues i.e. library, cafes, shops and community centres.

As a result of the publicity in advance of the session, several local residents made contact to offer support and volunteer. Contact was also made with a resident who had previously run something similar in another area of Billingham which had recently folded. This resident also offered their surplus refreshments and encouraged their 'regulars' to attend the new session.

Over 25 people attended the initial session from the community. A further 17 staff from local care homes were also invited to see how the session would run to encourage them to bring their residents to future sessions. Everyone was offered a tour of the Forum Theatre to go backstage and have their turn on the stage.

The session was a real success, with people playing cards and bingo and getting to know each other. Several people had arrived on their own and were welcomed and introduced to new people. One lady had brought her father, but both were soon chatting to other people, and the session provided a bit of respite for this lady. Links have been made with social prescribers and STEPS and information on the Volunteer Drivers Scheme was also distributed.

From some initial discussions, upcoming sessions will hopefully include chair yoga and healthy eating demonstrations.





## **5.0 Community Spaces Thank you and Network Launch Event 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

5.1 The first Community Spaces thank you event was held on 27<sup>th</sup> June, at the Stockton-on-Tees Employment and Training Hub, to recognise and celebrate the hard work of the scheme's staff and volunteers across the Borough. A Community Spaces network has been established to provide a forum for the almost 70 venues which are part of the Council's expanding Community Spaces initiative. The network will meet quarterly, with the next event scheduled for October at one of the Community Spaces, the Lighthouse Drop-in Centre.

5.2 The event included:

- An update on the Community Spaces Monitoring
- Information on Community Spaces funding for 2024-25
- A presentation provided by Heather Sykes (Catalyst) on funding and bid writing support
- A workshop focused on sharing achievements and challenges
- An opportunity for venues to network and to receive advice and support





## **6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

6.1 £60,000 of Public Health funding has secured the continuation of the Community Spaces initiative for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This has enabled venues to build on what was achieved in the first phase of the Warm Spaces scheme and work towards long-term sustainability.

6.2 Considering the increasing financial pressures on local authorities and the Council's Powering Our Future transformation programme, it is imperative that Community Spaces venues are empowered to achieve this long-term sustainability by accessing wider funding and are supported with funding bid applications.

6.3 The feedback reveals that it is apparent that there is an ongoing need for residents to be supported through the Community Spaces initiative. Several case studies gathered as part of this year's monitoring process have revealed that these spaces have played a pivotal role in preventing suicide and assisting with homelessness and domestic violence. Integral to this is the commitment from providers, Council staff and partners to accurately signpost and refer members of the public to the correct services and specific contacts within those services.

6.4 Looking forward, the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) team has established a network for Community Spaces providers to sustain and improve the Community Spaces offer across the Borough. Quarterly in-person events will be organised to provide training, networking and will include guest speakers who can provide services or sessions in venues.

6.5 The FSOT team also compile fortnightly emails containing information on relevant funding and events which may be of interest to Community Spaces venues. This example evidences the team's attempts to maintain ongoing dialogue with venues. FSOT staff are also willing to conduct more regular visits to venues to support their development, where there is a need.



## Recommendations

6.6 For the year 2024-25, it is recommended that:

1. The FSOT team, and representatives from partner organisations Thirteen and Catalyst, will assess the Community Spaces applications for 2024/25 and explore alternative options with venues who would still like to support residents, but the Community Spaces scheme is not appropriate for their venue/business model.
2. In-person quarterly Community Spaces Network events are arranged. These events will provide an opportunity for venues to come together, share ideas, be provided with updated information on funding and training. This will serve as a basis for venues to become more sustainable in line with the Council's Powering Our Futures programme.
3. Further joint working with Public Health on social isolation issues are explored.
4. Information on funding and training opportunities are regularly distributed via email to venues as part of the plan to increase the sustainability of the Community Spaces scheme.
5. Funding for Winter Warm Boxes 24/25 will be obtained by working with partner organisations, such as the Stockton and District Information and Advice Service and exploring options through Corporate Social Responsibility.
6. The FSOT and Community Engagement Team will work with Community Spaces venues to distribute Winter Warm Boxes.
7. Outreach support is provided for issues identified. For example, through work with Cleveland Police to arrange community safety drop-ins. Additional pension credit drop-ins, Employment and Training Hub on Tour sessions will also be arranged. Wider promotion of such sessions is also recommended.
8. FSOT continue to participate in Warm Welcome network and increase number of Community Spaces registered with Warm Welcome.
9. There will be increased promotion of the free SBC Community Transport Service and the Volunteer Drivers Scheme, to address transport issues for residents trying to access Community Spaces.
10. Options to ensure that there is at least one Community Space in each ward are explored.
11. Annual monitoring will take place in April 2025.

## Appendix 1

### Case Studies from Monitoring Conversations 2024

*A lady who has just had her fifth baby attended the hub, and all family members have ADHD. The family have just moved into a new home where the upstairs windows don't have any locks on. The Family Hub made a referral to get locks installed and this was sorted as soon as possible.*

**Billingham Family Hub**

*Someone who attends has mental health challenges and cares for his elderly mother and being able to be here for a space for him has been something that has kept him from going over the edge when things have gone badly.*

**- St Paul's**

*Another man comes who is a victim of domestic abuse. His little boy has been taken into foster care and he has been very mentally unwell. He has started coming to our sessions again and is making real progress. He sees it as a safe space. –*

**Salvation Army**

*A gentleman and his wife recently moved to the village from Bradford and didn't know anyone. They came along to the Community Space drop-in and were immediately accepted. People made them welcome and then helped them find tradespeople to help them renovate their house. They shared their knowledge of the area and where to access services. They made a point of sharing local history which was really kind and interesting. The couple both now volunteer at the centre and the local church. –*

**The Wilson Centre, Long Newton**

*People come to our volunteers with their personal problems and we listen and direct them to help if needed. One lady has been coming for over a year and she just needs to chat to us and unload her problems. She has had issues around housing and is struggling to get the right advice. She comes regularly with her children and we make a fuss of the kids. We have also supported homeless people and we let one put up his tent in our garden. –*

**St Chad's**

*In the Wednesday lunch group we provide a space for people to boost their confidence, give them a voice and create a safe space, giving them a feeling of belonging. –*

**Stockton Parish Church**

*The Lighthouse is my bolthole. I have a lot of problems and stress at home, but when I come here I can just be myself. I don't have to take part in activities if I don't want to. I don't have to hide what I am feeling or going through. I can step out of my real life situation and find my escape here. We are not judged, regardless of the issues we are struggling with, including alcohol addiction. The person who leads this service is like the glue that keeps it all together. He is a Godsend to us all and the person I turn to for help. –*

**Lighthouse**

*An elderly guy whose wife was taking his money and was making him take money from the bank. Starfish are working/worked with housing support, financial, safeguarding, crisis, mental health, GP and pharmacy teams. With all teams attending Starfish to support him and his wellbeing. Starfish have an ongoing relationship with his social worker. – Starfish*

*We have given our community a purpose, they look forward to dropping in for a coffee and seeing a friendly face. – Challoner House Community Centre*

*A couple who moved from Thornaby and who have attended the community space built new friendships with new members and are now members of the church giving them a sense of purpose and belonging - Rivers of ...*

*The feedback we receive is centred on how much people value it and the community themselves asked for it to be extended throughout the year. Several women who used to be part of a women's group but lost touch have reconnected and reformed their group through the Community Space. - Norton Methodist*

*One lady who uses a mobility scooter one year ago struggled to leave her flat. She started coming to the café / space and now comes regularly and has built up a relationship with Tracy. Her confidence has really grown and now gets out more to other activities as well. - Café Billingham*

*Gentleman was looking for Newtown Guest House as he was homeless – Called Moses Project and got number for the Guest House. Gave the days and times of Moses Projects and he used the phone to call the Guest House and arrange accommodation. Used the centre to charge his own mobile and was given tea and refreshments while he waited. – Newtown Resource Centre*

*The key issues are around loneliness and the need for companionship. People are happy to come to us. It is warm and comfortable and a focal point of the village. They talk about their problems and this really helps people.” The Wilson Centre, Long Newton*

*A young woman came into their venue and upon talking to their staff became very emotional, disclosing domestic abuse issues she was dealing with. Lakota staff supported her emotionally and made a referral to partner agency, A Way Out. Should the venue not be an open Community Space, the woman may not have felt comfortable to attend the venue and therefore make the disclosure which has opened avenues to support her. – Lakota*

*A man was sent to Redhill Hub on discharge from hospital. He needed help from the homeless team and was suffering with alcohol addiction. Although we didn't have the resources to support him on site, we were able to contact colleagues at SBC housing team and make an appointment for him to be seen that day. He had no means of transport and no money so we bought him a bus ticket and printed off the timetable for him to be able to make his appointment in Central Stockton. It is a good thing that we had the knowledge and contacts to be able to help him. – Redhill Family Hub*

*The sessions have grown month on month and now have a number of regular ladies that attend. They noted that they were missing the Chair based exercise that they used to attend at another community venue. The volunteers noted this and put a free arm chair exercise video on in their hall every Tuesday which is loved and looked forward to by the attendees. – St Columbas*

*A man came to us who was absolutely at rock bottom. He had been recently bereaved and was suffering some addiction problems. We managed to find help through CAB and the Moses Project. Now this person comes to help out at our drop-ins. It is lovely to see him so much better. He also now has a job. – Stockton Hope at St Andrew's*

*Been over a year and look forward to a Tuesday it's the company and chance to mix with a nice lot of people and made a lot of friends. Came along with my friends to start with. People who run are excellent and very warm and welcoming – St John's*

## Appendix 2

### List of participating venues in Community Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees by ward

67 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 (0)**
- **Eaglescliffe East (1)** – Tees Valley Community Church
- **Eaglescliffe West (2)** – Eaglescliffe Community Centre, The Wilson Centre (Long Newton)
- **Fairfield (2)** – Fairfield Library, Grangefield Youth and Community Centre
- **Grangefield (2)** - St Paul's Church, St John the Baptist Church
- **Hardwick and Salters Lane (2)** – Aspen Gardens, 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 (5)** – Five Lamps (The Youthy), Victoria Park Café, Thornaby Library (Gilmour Street), Teesside Vineyard Church, The Community Hub
- **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 Natrass 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. Billingham Forum
2. Splash
3. Thornaby Pool
4. Warm Welcome at Thornaby Pavilion
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. Redhill Family Hub
15. Stockton Family Hub
16. Thornaby Family Hub
17. Billingham Family Hub
18. Grangefield Youth & Community Centre
19. Stillington Youth & Community Centre
20. Glebe Community Centre
21. Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre
22. Eltham Crescent Community Centre
23. Robert Atkinson Community Centre
24. Café in the Park (John Whitehead Park)
25. St Columba's Church, Billingham
26. High Clarence Primary School
27. The Wilson Centre
28. St Paul's Church
29. St John the Baptist Church
30. Stockton Hope at St Andrew's Church
31. West End Bowling Club
32. Greens Lane Methodist Church
33. The Rings Community Hub
34. Five Lamps The Youthy



35. The Lighthouse Drop-in Centre
36. Victoria Park Café
37. Newtown Community Resource Centre
38. St Mary's Church
39. St Mary's Parish Hall
40. St Michael's and All Angels Church
41. Norton Grange Community Centre
42. Norton Methodist Church
43. Jubilee Church (Yarm Road Methodist Church)
44. St Peter's Church
45. The Place To Be (Starfish)
46. The Lighthouse Mental Health Drop-In Centre
47. St Chad's Church
48. Arc
49. Lakota Hub
50. Stockton Baptist Church
51. Roseberry Community Consortium
52. Stockton Parish Church
53. Rivers of Life
54. Stockton Salvation Army
55. The Willows Centre
56. Challoner House
57. Yarm Methodist Church
58. The Meadowings Community Centre