



Stewardship 



Warm Welcome Energy Fund Report

July 2023

Last winter, many in the UK were struggling with financial uncertainty; the cost of living crisis put millions of people in fuel poverty¹, with many forced to choose between food and warmth.

The overwhelming need across the UK generated a soar in demand for local community services, with many people reaching out for support for the first time.

The Warm Welcome initiative was established by the ChurchWorks Commission, a coalition of 15 Christian denominations united in 2021 to support those in our communities left vulnerable by the effects of Covid.

As the cost of living crisis further threatened to affect the livelihoods of those in need, last year, two coalition members – the Good Faith Partnership and Stewardship – spearheaded the

launch of Warm Welcome: a movement of churches, charities, community hubs and organisations willing to offer a warm, welcoming, safe place for those in their communities who needed support through the coldest months.



7,000+

REGISTERED TO BECOME WARM WELCOME SPACES SINCE THE LAUNCH ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022²

¹ In 2022, there were an estimated 13.4% of households (3.26 million) in fuel poverty in England under the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric, up from 13.1% in 2021 (3.16 million) – Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England 2023, (2022 data), Annual fuel poverty statistics report: 2023 - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2023) p. 1

² [Warm Welcome Impact Evaluation](#) p. 2



Through the generous support of philanthropists, trusts and the public:

£285,899

RAISED

286

GRANTS MADE TO ORGANISATIONS
ACROSS THE UK

This included a Christmas appeal run by the Daily Mirror, which over 500 people donated to.

Warm Welcome microgrants

This response was incredible to witness. Many of the organisations who so generously volunteered their people, time, resources and venues were feeling the effects of financial uncertainty and strain themselves. This didn't stop them from coming forward and seeking to serve those most in need.

The Warm Welcome Energy Fund was established to equip and encourage these organisations. Managed and distributed by Stewardship, the fund offered microgrants of £1,000 to active spaces in the most deprived parts of the UK.

This funding was used in a variety of ways, such as paying utility bills, supplying free refreshments or hot meals, providing materials for craft activities, or buying toys and games to welcome both young and old.

It has been a genuine pleasure and privilege to partner with so many Warm Welcome spaces in the incredible support they have provided those coming through their doors.

This report tells the story of amazing generosity, the way in which the grants were delivered and the significant impact on the lives of those served by the organisations who received them.

Westborough Methodist Church



Westborough Methodist Church is based in the heart of Scarborough, a seaside town in North Yorkshire. It's part of a larger circuit of 19 churches that Superintendent Graham Morgan looks after. The church reaches out to its community in several ways including a midweek coffee shop. As winter set in they were struggling to meet the rising costs of heating their building but still wanted to have a warm welcome for people in their community.

“We were very grateful for the grant from Stewardship” says Graham.

“It was the unconditional nature of the grant that struck us the most. It meant we didn’t need to account for everything and allowed us to focus on the main thing – meeting people’s need for company.”

Despite the bleakness of the cold winter weather and rising energy bills, people were most blessed by being in the company of others.

A significant number of those who came to their Warm Welcome space were members of the church who lived alone and craved the company of people.

Mark, a frequent visitor to the space, said, “I really enjoyed coming along and meeting my friends and reading the newspapers.” Another regular, Brian, commented, “The fellowship was good and something I looked forward to every week.”

Graham and his team had initially decided to step out in faith and open a Warm Welcome space in their building every Friday. Visitors were treated to chocolate biscuits and other snacks as well as newspapers, puzzle books and board games.

But as Graham notes, “They mainly just came to chat. We open the coffee shop on other days of the week and people sit apart. But in the Warm Welcome

space on a Friday, people congregated together. It was like they were meeting their own collective need and it was wonderful to see.”

Graham and his team ended the space at the end of March due to costs and availability of volunteers, but they are still reaching out to their community. Their monthly Lego church is proving to be a draw for families and they hope to start their Warm Welcome space again next winter.



How were the grants allocated?

Grants were allocated based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which uses geographic location to identify areas most in need.¹

The first 50 grants were all distributed to registered² Warm Welcome spaces in the top 15% most deprived areas of the UK.



Out of the 286 grants made:

89%

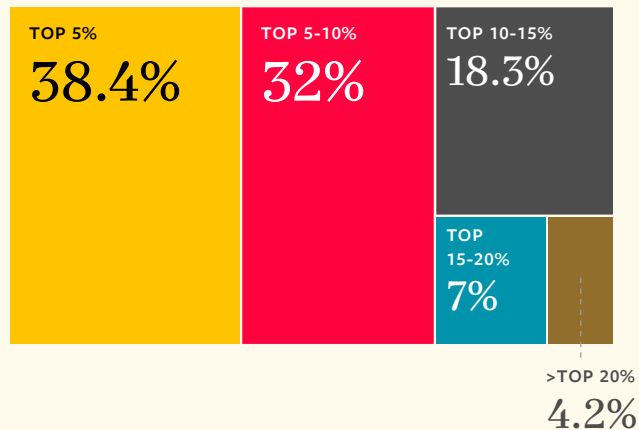
WENT TO THOSE IN THE TOP 15% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS OF THE UK

¹ The Index of Multiple Deprivation is designed and delivered by the UK government. Each devolved nation has their own index. These were used in tandem with each other to prioritise the applications. To find out more: [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#)

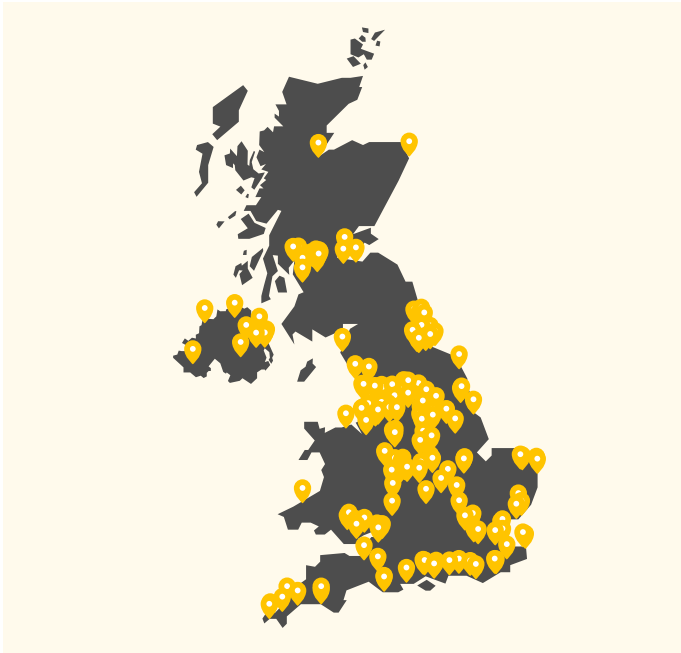
² Spaces registered via the [Warm Welcome website](#)

The majority of grants were made to those in the most deprived areas of the UK

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GRANTS MADE BY DEPRIVED AREA PERCENTAGE



Warm Welcome spaces awarded microgrants



The grants were made from December 2022 to May 2023. As the winter went on, more funding became available and many spaces decided to continue their work into the spring months, which the grants were able to support.

The fund was focused on areas across the UK. For every 100 grants made, 84 went to England, eight to Scotland, five to Wales and three to Northern Ireland (proportional to population size) to ensure as many people as possible across the nation could be supported.

The grants themselves were flexible, which meant that they could be used at the Warm Welcome spaces' discretion to enable the provision of a free, warm, welcoming and safe space for those in need. This ensured the best use of these funds to support local communities.

Middlesbrough FC Foundation

Lynsey Edwards

HEAD OF FOUNDATION

T

he Foundation is the official charity of Middlesbrough FC and has been going for nearly 30 years. We use the power of football and the prominence of the club in the local community, to raise aspirations and improve the lives of people across the Tees Valley.

Teesside has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country and the charity is



based in the two most deprived wards of Teesside.

We could sense that things were going to be tough and we would need all the help we could get.

We initially intended to use the grant money to host weekly events at the football stadium and the Herlingshaw Centre. Our aim was to provide a warm place for people who were struggling with their energy bills and the cost of food. We opened a number of sessions throughout the week. The heating was on, free tea and coffee were available and there was access to Wi-Fi. However, we didn't get a huge take up. It was possibly because the location of the venues was not easily accessible for a

regular event, so we decided to try something different.

A week before Christmas, we put on an event where people could go to the stadium for afternoon tea or a Santa party. They could meet the first team players and they were given a hamper with food in it that could easily be cooked on Christmas day. We held a similar event at the Herlingshaw Centre and over 80 families (around 200 people) attended in total. This included many from rural locations such as East Cleveland. The events were really popular and touched many people.



Wow, wow, wow! What can I say? Apart from a massive thank you so much for the event today. We could never afford to give our son these experiences and he is absolutely on cloud nine! He loved every minute and is absolutely amazed to have met the players. He has gone straight to his grandad's (94 years old and the biggest Middlesborough fan) to tell him all about it and show him his new hat and scarf. Honestly, from the bottom of my heart, I cannot thank you enough. What an amazing thing to do for the kids."

AN ATTENDEE OF THE CHRISTMAS EVENT

Although we didn't deliver the Warm Welcome space at the scale we had hoped to before Christmas, it has since led to the development of a partnership with another local charity.

Through this collaboration we are now able to launch a Warm Welcome space with an activity programme that will run for the next two years focused on health and wellbeing.

We are also devising a programme of activities that can be adapted and run at other Warm Welcome spaces in the area.

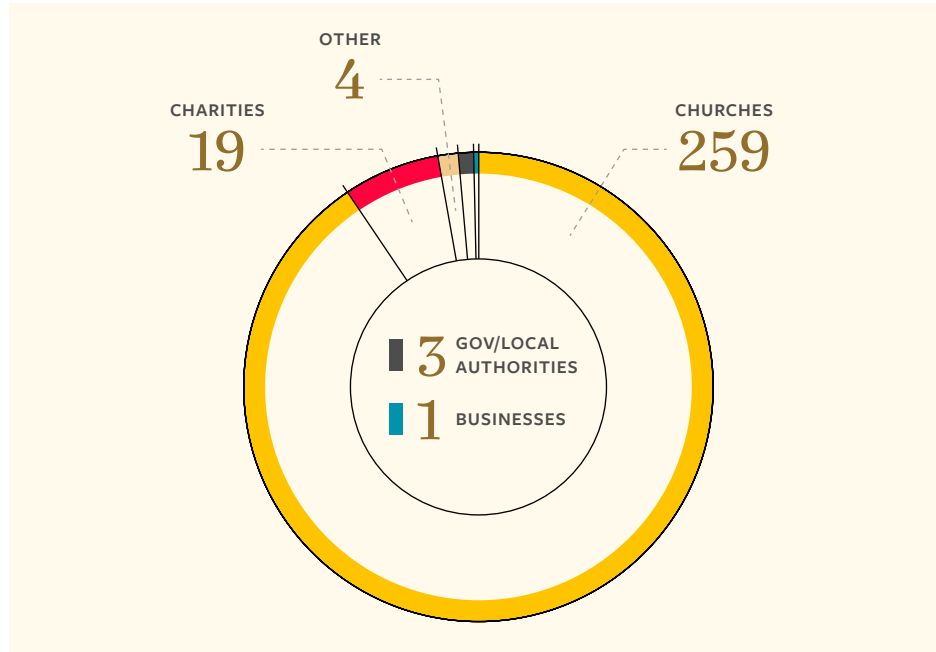
We want to express our thanks to Stewardship for their grant to support Middlesbrough FC Foundation. We really appreciated the flexibility of the funding grant that was given to us because it allowed us to pivot to something different when our initial plans didn't have the impact that we had hoped. The grant funding has now helped us leverage further funding locally, where we now have a £125,000 project to deliver Warm Welcome space-related activity for the next two years!



2

What types of organisations
were gifted the grants?

Number of grants made to organisation type



The Warm Welcome Energy Fund was initiated primarily by a number of Christian funders who were eager to support local churches that had opened their doors to become Warm Welcome spaces. This means that the majority of organisations funded were churches, though these funders did also support a number of other organisations too.

Though the predominant number of grants went to churches, a wide variety of spaces such as other faith organisations, community centres and libraries were supported.

The great investment and interest of such a wide variety of organisations shows the generous spirit of all who took part.

3

More than just
a warm space

These spaces provided not only a warm place to go but also an opportunity for community to build.



Of those who attended a Warm Welcome space, the primary reasons for doing so were listed as¹:

34%

‘TO MEET NEW PEOPLE’

31%

‘TO MEET PEOPLE I KNOW’

This means 65% of those interviewed came for the social support in addition to their desire for a warm and safe space.

Creating a place for community to thrive was a clear intention of many spaces. While the circumstances that led to this initiative were difficult, many have used this tough situation to create sustainable solutions for support and to bring hope to their community.

New Life Church Leigh

Lynn Disley

TRUSTEE



We started a coffee morning shortly after the Covid pandemic ended because we wanted to create a space where people could gather again. Many people had felt extremely isolated and alone during the lockdowns and the church was now able to provide a safe place to sit, chat and have a cup of tea and a biscuit.

As the cost of living crisis began to hit, we knew we could step into the gap once again. So, we registered as a Warm Welcome space with a view to expanding our provision and meet the needs of our community. We began by offering a morning session on Wednesday mornings.

People immediately started to come and there are now around 25-30 people who still join us each week.

Our church is in a highly deprived area of Leigh.

We found that people often came along for food and warmth, but also for companionship – to meet others who were in a similar place of need.

Margaret, 83, said that she loved coming to the Warm Welcome space

because it was, “Somewhere to come and spend time with people”. Because she was living on her own, the weekly event has become something of a lifeline to Margaret and others like her who suffer with loneliness and isolation. It became apparent that the lack of money to pay the bills was just the tip of the iceberg.

We were offering light refreshments with lots of beautiful home-made cakes and treats, but we were conscious that our space, having such a close connection to church, should be something more than just a soup kitchen.

We wanted to be a place where there was always food to be had but we also wanted to be a place that offered something more - the hope of the Gospel.

Because of our Warm Welcome space, some have now started coming to church to find out more about the Christian faith.

None of this would have been possible had it not been for the grant we received from Stewardship. It really helped us keep our Warm Welcome space running beyond the winter months and it's our intention to keep it going indefinitely if we can afford to.



We are so grateful for the money we received because we wouldn't have been able to offer the depth of hope to our community without it.

4

The future of Warm Welcome

Many spaces like Westborough Methodist Church have paused their work over the summer, but they recognise that their support will be needed again when winter comes around again.

As the summer melts our memories of those harder winter months, we need to prepare for the next cold season. While energy prices have fallen slightly, they remain high and we have an opportunity to continue this great work in our local communities.



78%

OF ORGANISATIONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE WARM WELCOME CAMPAIGN SAID THEY WOULD WANT TO BE INVOLVED IF THE CAMPAIGN RAN AGAIN¹

¹ [Warm Welcome Impact Evaluation](#), p. 53



With the cost of living crisis not showing any signs of abating, preparations will begin immediately for a Warm Welcome campaign that is bigger and better next winter, nurturing a movement which feels like it is just getting started. The outlook for Britain may be bleak in many ways, but Warm Welcome shows that we still have plenty to be hopeful about.

When faced with crisis and despair, the community response to the cost of living crisis has been nothing short of heroic.

Now it's up to the rest of society to follow where those heroes in our midst are leading."

David Barclay

WARM WELCOME CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

**Extract from former Prime Minister
Gordon Brown's speech made to
the Church Works Commission**

MAY 2023



The speed at which an idea, first formulated last summer, has turned into a burgeoning national movement is a reflection not only of the most severe cost of living crisis in 70 years but also of the potential that often lies latent in our communities for mutual support. I am proud that in my own county of Fife, our church halls and libraries have been opened up to heat those who are cold, while simultaneously providing food

to those who are hungry and offering comfort to those who feel isolated and alone.

More than half of the warm spaces have been provided in churches and by faith groups, showing once again that great social movements are invariably built on ethical foundations. The new facilities have offered not just the warmth of heat but the warmth of friendship with an outstretched hand for those coping with isolation during and after Covid.

The message of Warm Welcome is quite simple: that someone cares and, while 40% of Warm Welcome users testified to always or often feeling lonely before coming to the space, that figure fell to only 6% after meeting Warm Welcome

helpers. Indeed 62% of users said they now never or rarely feel alone. And even more - 73% of respondents to David Barclay's comprehensive survey say that they have benefited from meeting new people, participating in communal leisure activities, or simply using the space's free Wi-Fi to get back in touch with friends."





We're now raising funds to equip more Warm Welcome spaces next winter.

Support our work

Scan to make a gift



or visit [stewardship.org.uk/
partners/WarmWelcomeGFF](https://stewardship.org.uk/partners/WarmWelcomeGFF)

Find out more

Visit warmwelcome.uk

Contact the Campaign Director,
David Barclay at [@goodfaith.org.uk](mailto:david.barclay@goodfaith.org.uk)

The Warm Welcome Campaign is powered by a coalition of charities, convened by the Good Faith Foundation (registered charity no. 1188639).

Stewardship



Stewardship serves and connects 30,000 Christian givers with 12,000 charities, churches and Christian workers, helping release their generosity and steward over £100m of financial resources each year to strengthen their missions and ministries.

www.stewardship.org.uk

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