

FACTSHEET - Welsh Government funding to Support Warm Hubs

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline the Welsh Government support for Warm Hubs (also known as Warm Banks, Warm Places, Cosi Corners).

Background

On Tuesday 20th September the Welsh Government announced £1m of funding to support Warm Hubs as safe and warm places within the local community that people can go to keep warm during the Winter. With domestic fuel prices increasing rapidly it is expected that many people will struggle to keep their homes at a healthy temperature, particularly those people at home all day, the elderly and vulnerable. Although it should be noted that the demand for Warm Places may not be from just older or vulnerable groups and may include others who are at home all day such as home workers.

Many organisations including local authorities, community councils, faith groups, sports clubs, community centres are already setting up, or looking to set up, Warm Hubs within the local communities. Warm Hubs are intended as places in local communities where people can find a safe and warm environment during the day to help reduce the cost of heating their own homes and to help people facing extreme fuel poverty this winter.

What are Warm Hubs

At a minimum Warm Hubs will be places where individuals are provided with a welcoming, accessible, safe and warm environment. Early discussions with stakeholders have indicated a clear ambition for Warm Hubs to deliver more than just a warm space to sit. Warm Hubs should be an inviting place to be and not just offer the equivalent of a static 'bus'. Warm Hubs should be open and inclusive and available for all in the community to use. The focus should be on identifying and delivering to local need and delivering a Warm Hub response which delivers to that need.

Warm Hubs might include:

- basic refreshments and snacks (as a minimum) but may extend to provision of a more substantive meal where possible.
- the provision of advice and support services to those who attend, this can be for example advice and support on financial matters, health and well-being or digital accessibility.
- further enrichment activity such as exercise, arts and cultural activity (subject to location and availability).

How should Warm Hubs be delivered.

As is noted above many organisations have already started to establish or plan for the provision of Warm Hubs both formally and informally. Much of the expertise on where Warm Hubs should be placed and what should be provided within Warm Hubs rests within local areas. Local authorities working in partnership with their public sector, third sector and community partners will be best placed to gauge and understand local needs, existing provision and to design and deliver local solutions. There may also be a role for the private sector who might want to support local approaches to Warm Hubs.

In some cases local authorities are already working in partnership through existing arrangements such as Public Services Boards to consider how to provide Warm Hubs this winter. This partnership working will be key to the successful delivery of Warm Hubs this winter.

Where possible, and where relevant, Warm Hubs should link up / complement other activity which engages with people within their communities or with young people during school holidays to ensure an integrated approach to tackling poverty or the cost of living.

Warm Hubs should be open and inclusive environments which encourage people to access the support available. Every effort should be taken to avoid any stigma attached with attending a Warm Hub.

Who should be involved in Warm Hubs

The delivery of Warm Hubs should be driven by local needs. The expectation will be that the delivery of Warm Hubs will be led by local authorities. However, it is expected as part of the funding requirements that local authorities will engage with their local partners, including Community Voluntary Councils (CVC's), in the development of Warm Hubs and in the provision / distribution of funding at a local level to the Warm Hubs. CVC's may for example have a role in supporting local authorities in the distribution of smaller scale funding to community led Warm Hubs.

Whilst some of the Warm Hubs may be in local authority owned / managed buildings they may equally be established by / through local community, faith or third sector organisations or sports clubs using their own community assets or indeed through / by other public sector bodies. The private sector may also be able to play a role in the delivery of Warm Hubs and opportunities should be explored through local business groups and possibly through working with the Federation of Small Business and the CBI.

Working with the local CVCs may also provide opportunities to identify and access others sources of support for community organisations to deliver / help deliver Warm Hubs, for example the Communities Facilities Programme.

In addition, some national services / stakeholders may be able to provide support for Warm Hubs, particularly around extra advice, guidance and support for possible enrichment activities. This may include for example the Citizens Advice, Arts Council for Wales, Sports Wales and National Museums and Galleries in Wales.

It is important that the approach to the delivery of Warm Hubs is joined up and delivers to local needs. In the same way that it is expected local authorities will work with local stakeholders, it is expected that any organisation wishing to put Warm Hub provision in place will contact their local authority or their local CVC to ensure they are delivering as part of the overall area approach and not duplicating.

It may be more appropriate in some places for organisations to work with existing Warm Hubs rather than establish additional ones. Local authorities, alongside promoting the availability of Warm Hubs in their communities, should make it clear how people should be able to contact them should they wish to establish / support an existing Warm Hub.

What is the Welsh Government Funding for?

The Welsh Government funding is not intended to replace or duplicate existing efforts to deliver Warm Hubs but to expand or extend existing proposals or enable further Warm Hubs to be developed.

As is outlined above local areas will be best placed to design and deliver Warm Hubs based on local needs, demographics, geography and other available provision.

The funding should be utilised to directly support the Warm Hubs themselves and the people who attend them. and for any additional expenses associated with using a place as a Warm Hub. Examples might include (but are by no means exhaustive):

- provision of refreshments, snacks and if relevant to the location more substantive meals
- additional expenses associated with extending the opening hours of existing facilities or contributions to heat and light if facilities are opened specifically
- additional costs relating to cleaning costs, refuse removal (e.g. community halls)
- equipment to support adaptation of spaces, chairs, tables,
- contribution to internet costs (particularly to support advice service provision in community areas / centres) – it is not anticipated that this will include costs relating to hardware
- facilities for charging mobile phones / IT equipment
- small items such as kettles, cups, plates etc
- enrichment items / activities
- transport to / from Warm Hubs – depending on local need
- volunteer costs
- raising awareness / promotion of warm hubs

How will the funding be distributed

It is proposed to distribute the Warm Hubs funding via local government either through the WLGA or a lead local authority (subject to agreement with local government). The quantum of funding per local authority area will be agreed with the WLGA utilising where possible existing agreed formula.

Local authorities will be expected to ensure that arrangements are in place at a local level to ensure that the Welsh Government Funding is made available to those who are delivering the Warm Hubs (i.e. through local grants or similar). This might include working with the local CVC to facilitate smaller funding amounts to community groups where appropriate

What Monitoring will be required

Local authorities working with their partners will be asked to map the facilities in use and those that could potentially be used.

Local authorities will be asked to record / report the number of Warm Hubs supported, the number of individuals attending the Warm Hub and provide a narrative on the type of activity / support provided. Local authorities will also be asked to provide the locations for each Warm Hub both on their own promotional material and for any national promotional material. This will include information on the organisation responsible for the Warm Hub.

Safeguarding

It is important that Warm Hubs are seen as safe places for those who may want to attend, particularly as some attendees may be vulnerable. In working to develop Warm Hubs with partners local authorities will want to be mindful of making sure that the safeguarding needs of both those who attend and those who facilitate / service the Warm Hubs are met.

It is likely that Warm Hubs and any associated activities associated with the Warm Hubs will be appropriately risk assessed and that any relevant health related advice / guidance which applies at the time is taken into account. It is hoped though that a balance of risk approach is considered when considering the delivery of Warm Hubs so as to consider the risks to individuals of not providing safe and warm places to go this winter against the risks associated with people attending a Warm Hub.