



Welcoming Spaces

A guide for Stoke-on-Trent Organisations



What is a Welcoming Space?

A Welcoming Space is a place of connection in the community (such as a community centre, library or place of faith), where people can meet up, socialise and access support relating to the cost of living.

There are free-of-charge services available at each Welcoming Space – these will vary but may include:

- access to support about money, welfare, and mental wellbeing
- community activities
- access to computers, free Wi-Fi and charging points
- heated space

Introduction	03
Location and Accessibility	04
Transport	05
Heating Costs	06
Volunteers	07
Health and Safety	08
Food Safety	09
Safeguarding	10
Promotion	11
Support for Welcoming Spaces	12
Appendix & Useful Links	13

Welcoming spaces can be anything from a community café to an advice drop-in; anywhere that people can access **free or low-cost services to support with the cost of living** in a warm environment.

This could be – a community cafe, an exercise/craft/activity club, drop-in sessions with advice organisations, a homework club, or just a warm space where people can socialise and be comfortable.

If you are thinking of converting your facilities or one of your existing activities into a Welcoming Space and would like some advice, please contact kezia.liddle@vast.org.uk

Here are a few examples of Welcoming Spaces that have been established:



Libraries in Stoke-on-Trent are Welcoming Spaces where people can meet up, socialise, access support on issues such as money, welfare and mental wellbeing, access computers, free wi-fi and charging points, and heated spaces. They also run activity sessions for children.

Staff at the library can help with:

- information about Universal Credit
- free access to computers (ends 15 minutes before library closes)
- free Wi-Fi
- free computer skills training
- support to complete your Universal Credit form online
- work clubs



Fegg Hayes Futures runs The Hub@ST6, in Fegg Hayes. They offer a wide range of support to our community, from providing free food for anyone who needs it via the Fareshare scheme, to offering supported volunteer opportunities to those wanting to occupy some time whilst also giving back to their neighbourhood.

Fegg Hayes Futures provide a variety of cost of living advice services, including surgeries at the Hub from Groundwork's Green Doctors who can offer energy saving advice and provide free energy saving measures, and Potteries Moneywise who offer support to help people increase their confidence with money. They also offer food provision.



Blurton Community Hub is a charity based in Blurton, aiming to support our community in any way possible, and directing to further support from other agencies.

Blurton Community Hub offer crafts, games, and children's activities, all of which are free entry – they also offer refreshments for 50p. They often have visits from the local police Community Support Officer, a social prescriber, and other organisations, to offer advice and support.

Location and Accessibility

The following factors are important for good physical access:

Approach to building (e.g. dropped curbs, signage, etc.).

Entrance accessibility (e.g. ramps, steps and handrails).

Doors (exterior and interior) with access for all and accessible routes.

Lifts and stairlifts that are easily accessible.

Keeping aisles, corridors, doorways and spaces free of obstruction and with space to accommodate wheelchair and buggy users.

Means for people with disabilities to leave the building quickly in the event of an emergency.

Alarm systems suitable for alerting the hearing impaired.

Critical distances (e.g. width of corridors, aisles and security sensors).

Want to ask about accessibility in your building? Contact Support@vast.org.uk

When planning your Welcoming Space, make sure you consider any potential access needs, and make this information available in advance.

For example, people with disabilities who would like to access your services may need to know about level access, accessible toilets, parking, public transport, hearing loops, sensory-friendly areas and more.

GUIDE
EUAN'S
Warm Banks
Accessibility
Guidance



Transport

For people to be able to access your welcoming space, it's important that they're able to get there. Travel costs could be a barrier to many potential users – including parking costs.

Consider:

- **Do you have free parking available?**
- **Are there a limited number of spaces?**
- **Do you know where the nearest parking is?**
- **Do you know where the nearest bus stops are?**
- **Can you advise your visitors on bus times and public transport access?**



Door2Door Transport is a community transport service for residents of **Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent**. Our fabulous team of Volunteer Drivers support people to get out and about in their communities helping reduce isolation and enabling people to maintain their independence.

Who can use the service?

- Adults who are a resident of Newcastle-under-Lyme or Stoke-on-Trent and are unable to access public transport or do not have access to their own vehicle
- Wheelchair users where they are able to transfer to a standard vehicle and the wheelchair/walkers may be collapsed to fit into the boot of a car.

Door2Door Transport can be used for a variety of journeys including:

- Health-related appointments (where transport is not the responsibility of the local health service)
- Social/recreational events and clubs
- Visiting friends
- Banking, shopping, hairdressing

01782 621936

Website

A fare is charged based on the distance travelled.

Energy Efficiency

Advice on saving energy in a community space:

[How to save energy in your community building | Centre for Sustainable Energy \(cse.org.uk\)](#)



Read the [ENERGY SAVING TRUST GUIDE TO SETTING YOUR HEATING CONTROLS](#) to ensure you're being efficient with your energy

Groundwork West Midlands – Sustainable Ventures



Sustainable Ventures is a project that provides fully funded energy efficiency audits for SMEs and charities in Stoke-on-Trent, as part of UKSPF. Groundwork produce energy efficiency audit reports, with carbon reduction action plans that focus on improving the overall sustainability of organisations in the area. They also support organisations with accessing grants to support with their transition to a more sustainable future.

Register interest by email:
sbswestmidlands@groundwork.org.uk

Contact online at: [Contact | Sustainable Business Consultants \(groundworksbs.org.uk\)](#)



Looking for funding?

The VAST Vault is an online resource for Stoke-on-Trent's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

We will help you to identify the best funding streams available for your organisation and work with you to develop your application. We'll do everything in our power to give you the best chance of success.

As part of our commitment to developing and advancing the local third sector, we want to provide the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire voluntary organisations with the most up to date funding opportunities and achieve the best success rate possible so that the local voluntary sector can continue to thrive.

You can contact us here:

01782 683030

Support@vast.org.uk

Or visit the Vault [here](#):



Volunteers

Utilising volunteers is a fantastic way of providing a Welcoming Space and enabling people to feel like they are helping their community.

In order to accommodate volunteers within your Welcoming Spaces, it's important to have the basics in place to ensure volunteers are treated fairly, safely and included within your organisation.

You should have the below items in place:

- **A volunteering policy, which covers the basics such as points of contact, expectations of the role and other important information relevant to volunteers.**
- **A safeguarding policy, which covers both adults and children.**
- **Confirmation that volunteers are covered under your public liability insurance.**

If you do not have these in place, then **don't panic!** VAST has premade templates that are ready to go, you just need to personalise them to your organisation.

If you'd like any support around recruiting or engaging with volunteers, please email volunteering@vast.org.uk where a member of our Team will be happy to help.



DBS Checks

DBS checks can help ensure that vulnerable service users are safe – but they're not always needed. For guidance on whether your volunteer role will require DBS checks, [see our flow chart here.](#)

Looking to recruit volunteers?

VAST Volunteering can help to match you up with suitable volunteers. Email volunteering@vast.org.uk or visit our website [HERE](#) for more information.

Health and Safety

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments – for both your building, and any activities you put on – are important to ensure that visitors to your Welcoming Space will be safe.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum you must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in your business (hazards),
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk),
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

You can find more information on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#), including [templates and example risk assessments](#).

HSE also have a [health and safety checklist for village and community halls](#).

Warm Welcome have a [Risk Assessment Template](#) – how this risk assessment template works:

Step 1: For each identified risk or hazard, you give a rating between 1 and 5 for:

- Severity (S) If the identified risk happened, how serious would the consequence be? The rating ranges from a negligible outcome to a potential fatality.
- Likelihood (L) How likely is the identified risk to happen? The rating ranges from improbable to guaranteed.

Step 2: You then multiply the 2 numbers together to give a Risk Rating. Using the coloured table below you can see whether the Risk Rating indicates that you need to take further action to keep people safe.

Severity	Likelihood				
	1. Improbable	2. Possible	3. Even chance	4. Very likely	5. Guaranteed
1. Negligible	1	2	3	4	5
2. Minor Injury	2	4	6	8	10
3. Major injury	3	6	9	12	15
4. Admitted as in-patient	4	8	12	16	20
5. Fatality or life changing injury	5	10	15	20	25

Acceptable, no further action required	G
Acceptable, with suitable controls	Y
Acceptable, only with high level controls in place	O
Unacceptable risk, plan out or add further controls	R

Step 3: Put measures in place to minimise the likelihood and impact of each hazard.

Step 4: Make it someone's responsibility to monitor and report on each risk area.

Health and Safety

Food Safety

If you handle, prepare, store, and serve food occasionally, and on a small scale, you do not need to register. You do not need a food hygiene certificate to make or to sell food for charity events, however you do need to make sure that you handle food safely.

Follow the 4Cs of food hygiene – cleaning, chilling, cooking and avoiding cross contamination.

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, using hand sanitisers particularly if hand washing facilities are not readily available.
- Always wash fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart.
- Do not use food past its use-by date.
- Make sure food is bought from reputable suppliers.
- Always read any cooking instructions and make sure food is properly cooked before you serve it.
- Ensure food preparation areas are well maintained and fit for purpose.
- Ensure that food preparation areas are suitably cleaned and sanitised after use and wash any equipment you are using in hot soapy water.
- Keep food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible and cover where necessary.
- Dispose of packaging materials and food waste properly.
- Have a dedicated area for storing cleaning chemicals away from the foodstuffs.

When you serve home-made cakes at community events there are a few guidelines to follow:

- A recipe is used from a reputable source.
- The people who make the cakes/biscuits must follow good food hygiene advice.
- The cakes are stored and transported safely.
- Be particularly careful when cakes contain fresh cream.
- Label all the ingredients.

Information from the [places of welcome](#) site.

The Food Standards Agency have free online food safety courses available to help you and your business comply with food hygiene and food standards. The e-learning courses include:

- [Allergen training](#)
- [Labelling training](#)
- [Root cause analysis training](#)
- [Traceability training](#)
- [Vacuum packing training](#)

Useful Links:



Health and Safety

Safeguarding

Creating a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued, is at the heart of safeguarding.

It's about making sure your organisation is run in a way that actively prevents harm, harassment, bullying, abuse and neglect. It's also about being ready to respond safely and well if there is a problem.

Everyone in the organisation has a role to play in safeguarding. It should become part of your day-to-day activities.

Every organisation that delivers charitable activities has a duty to safeguard volunteers, staff members, participants and donors.

The Charity Commission has produced [detailed safeguarding guidance](#) that sets out the specific responsibilities for voluntary organisations.

Even if your charity is unregistered, you are expected to follow the guidance and treat safeguarding children and adults at risk as a priority. This applies to all charities, even if you do not specifically work with children or adults at risk.

The guidance is also good practice even if your organisation is not a charity, because these are standards the public will expect.

[NVCO offers a lot of guidance on safeguarding HERE](#)

[Find safeguarding training for staff and volunteers HERE](#)

NCVO Recommends these guides for policy writing:

- [NSPCC Learning](#)
- [Ann Craft Trust](#)

Useful numbers:

- ChildLine: 08001111
- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 808 5000 and [website](#)
- Elder Abuse Helpline: 0808 808 8141
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247

[You can find local organisations offering mental health support on the Stoke-on-Trent Community Directory](#)



Promotion

We highly recommend adding your organisation, services, welcoming spaces, and any support groups to the [Stoke-on-Trent Community Directory](#). This will help local people to find you and your services easily. If you need help with adding your listing, please email Monienne.stone@vast.org.uk.



If you do offer services and support with the cost-of-living or you are a 'Welcoming Space', [please list your services on the Stoke-on-Trent Community Directory here](#). The Community Directory is a one-stop-shop for support and services across Stoke-on-Trent and includes lots of information and listings that is split into a number of categories:

- Things to do, including community spaces, cafes, and clubs.
- Health, mental health, and wellbeing support.
- Education, training, and skills.
- Food, money, and energy support – especially useful for cost-of-living support.
- General information and advice including advocacy, legal support, and more.
- Support and advice for carers.
- Safety information and advice including around domestic and sexual violence, safeguarding and more.
- Family support.
- SEN and disability support, and
- Help with housing and home support.

Find out more about the Directory here:
<https://stokecommunitydirectory.co.uk/about-us/>

[You can find a step-by-step guide for adding your listing\(s\) to the directory here.](#)

Social Media Advertising

Social media is a great way to promote your welcoming space. Some tips and tricks:

- Remember to post regularly – don't assume everyone sees every post!
- The best time to post on social media is in the morning.
- Make sure your posts are accessible – see our guide [here](#).
- Build your network – connect with other organisations and join groups.
- Use pictures, not just plain text



Support for Welcoming Spaces

Useful Contact Numbers:

Citizen's Advice
[0808 2787876](tel:08082787876)

Groundwork
01782 829909

Potteries Moneywise
01782 408685

Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline
[0808 800 2234](tel:08088002234)

Stepchange Debtline
0800 138 1111

National Debtline
0808 808 4000

Beat the Cold
[01782 914915](tel:01782914915)

Money Matters
[01782 470980](tel:01782470980)

Samaritans
116 123 or
[0330 094 5717](tel:03300945717)

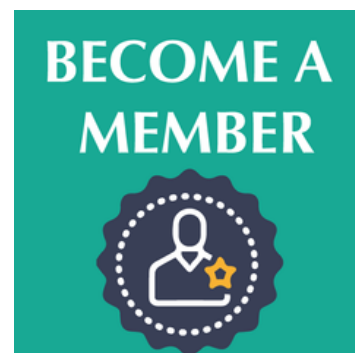
Disability Solutions
01782 638300

Remember - you don't need to be an expert! You can signpost to other organisations for support with specialist subjects, like financial, debt, or disability advice.

VAST can support you with a range of things, including:

- **Governance Support**
- **Funding**
- **Volunteering**
- **Training**
- **Networking**
- **Accountancy**
- **Design and Digital**
- **Community Engagement and promotion**

VAST membership is free and enables you to access our full range of support



Contact Us:

-  Support@vast.org.uk
-  <https://vast.org.uk/>
-  01782 683030

Appendix and Useful Links

Stoke-on-Trent Community Directory

Energy Saving Trust - Useful articles and video resources about reading bills, energy saving etc.

Charity Finance Group - Cost of Living Hub

Places of Welcome

Euan's Guide - Warm Banks Accessibility Guidance

Centre for Sustainable Energy - How to Save Energy in your Community Building

Health and Safety England

Food Standards Agency - Free Online Food Safety Training

Warm Welcome UK

Great Winter Get-Together - Inclusion and Reaching Out Fact Sheet

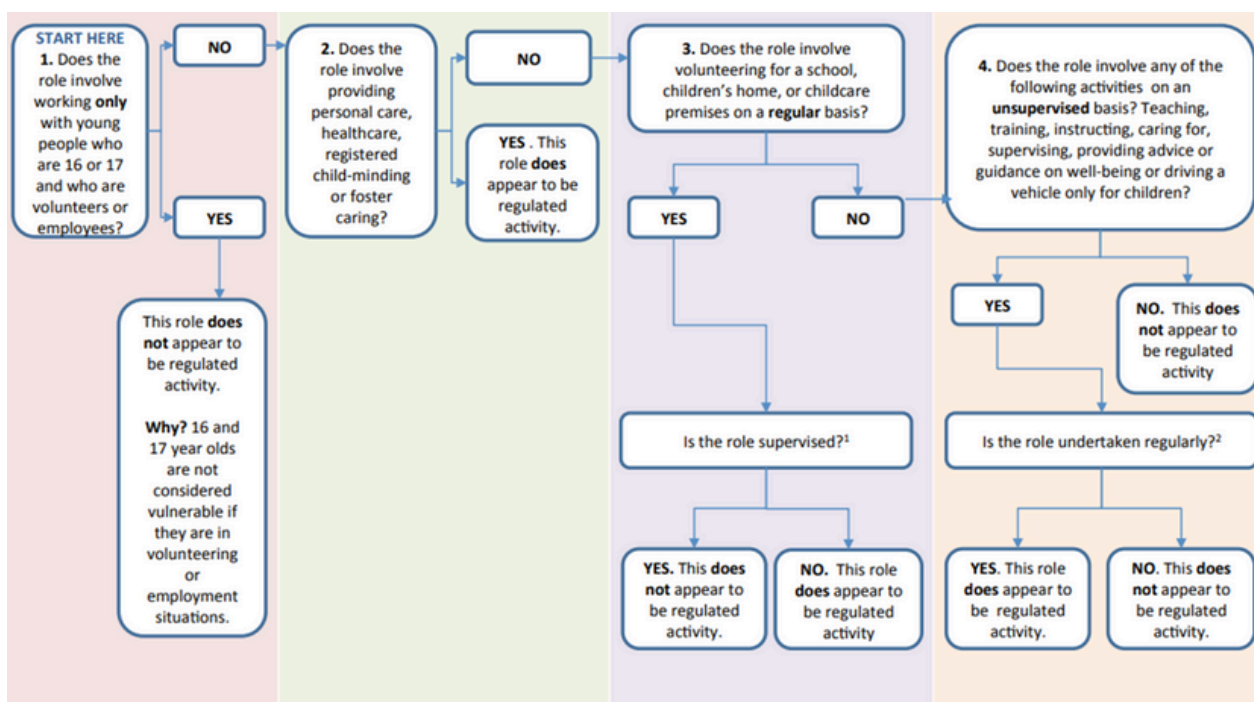
Warm Welcome UK - Step by Step Guide to setting up a Welcoming Space

Camerados - Public Living Rooms Guidance

JustGiving - Free Guide - Winter Fundraising Guide

Charity Resource Hub - Cost of Living

Do I need to DBS Check? Flowchart:





vast 



INVESTING IN
COMMUNITIES

