

**COMMUNITY  
ACTION  
SUFFOLK**

Strengthening the voluntary and community sector



# Really Useful Guide to Warm Rooms

Your essential guide to  
setting up a 'Warm Room'

November 2022

# Welcome

Welcome to the *Really Useful Guide to Warm Rooms*. It is created to provide a useful, practical guide to support you as you set up, or consider setting up a venue as a Warm Room.

This guide has been created by Community Action Suffolk (CAS) in partnership with the Rural Coffee Caravan and is intended to support anyone thinking of creating a Warm Room in their premises. It provides an overview of what you may need to consider, as well as sources of further information and resources - supporting you to successfully set-up and manage a Warm Room.

## What is a Warm Room?

Within this guide a Warm Room means a safe, warm\* and welcoming space within your local community, which people can attend regularly, free of charge to keep warm, enjoy a hot drink and meet new friends. \*18-21°C is considered a comfortable temperature

## Why are Warm Rooms needed?

The cost of living crisis is likely to impact all of us at some point, and Warm Rooms are one way communities can support each other during this challenging time. Access to a Warm Room will help people to reduce their energy usage at home and therefore, enable cost savings.

## Who are Warm Rooms for?

It is possible that any one of us may need the support of a Warm Room and therefore, your Warm Room should be inclusive and promote access for all. To do this, it may be beneficial to consider a code of conduct on acceptable behaviour for everyone to adhere to.

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# 1. Before you start

## Think A.R.M.C.H.A.I.R.S.



**All:** Is your Warm Room open to all? Have you considered accessibility for people with disabilities or mobility issues? It is likely that your Warm Room will attract a wide range of people, with diverse needs and expectations, and you will need to consider their safety and any safeguarding concerns.<sup>1</sup> Have a look at our 'scenarios' section to think about and discuss how you would manage these.

**Regular:** Warm Rooms should be places that people can regularly attend. You might have the 'perfect' space within your community building, however, if it is already regularly in use it may not be suitable.

**Money:** Do you need additional funding to support your Warm Room? Opening up your space as a Warm Room may mean you incur additional costs; do you have enough funds to cover these? If not, you may wish to apply for further funding to support energy and refreshment costs. You can look for possible funding using the [Funding for Suffolk search](#).<sup>2</sup>

**Comfortable:** If people are going to be using the Warm Room regularly it is important the space should be warm and inviting i.e., have plenty of seating and warm lighting. You might have to purchase additional furnishing. You can save money by sourcing furniture for free via places such as, the [Freecycle Network](#) and [Gumtree Freebies](#).

**Health and Safety:** You might need to put in place some additional health and safety measures to ensure your Warm Room and the rest of your community building is suitable for use. What additional measures might you need to consider?

COVID-19 and flu are health concerns to be aware of and you will need to ensure your Warm Room has adequate ventilation. You may need to open windows to allow air flow or invest in free-standing air filtration units which can help improve air quality and reduce the risk of infection.

You may need to increase cleaning protocols for both your Warm Room and other facilities throughout your building i.e., toilets and communal areas. When selecting furnishing and activities think about how these will be kept clean and avoid items which cannot be wiped clean. It may not be appropriate to allow anyone with a symptomatic respiratory illness into the Warm Space in case of onward transmission (spreading the illness). If possible, anyone with a respiratory illness should test for COVID-19 before accessing the Warm Space.

**Assessments:** You may need to review your existing risk assessments to ensure they cover the Warm Room. What might you need to include in your risk assessment to help you manage capacity and cover any incidents? You may need to consider how you will turn people away if you reach capacity, how you will communicate this and support those that cannot enter e.g. signpost to the nearest Warm Room. You will need to minimise congestion in corridors and stairwells by considering a one-way system. You may also consider use of face masks and social distancing.

<sup>1</sup> [Safeguarding support from CAS](#) You can contact Jacqui Wilkinson, Training, Safeguarding and Quality Framework Development Officer at Community Action Suffolk [jacqui.wilkinson@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:jacqui.wilkinson@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk) for support

<sup>2</sup> If you need additional support or would like to chat through your fundraising needs, please contact Louise Fairbrother, Financial Sustainability Officer at Community Action Suffolk [louise.fairbrother@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:louise.fairbrother@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk) 01473 345400

**Insurance:** Check with your insurance company that your Warm Room activities are covered under your existing policy and if not, an amendment will be required. If you are planning to enable Warm Room users to watch T.V. or videos you will need to make sure you have all the correct licenses in place.<sup>3</sup> Also, be mindful of content as it is likely you will have a mix of children and adults.

**Regulations:** Remember you are responsible for ensuring the safety of Warm Room users, other building users, staff and volunteers and therefore, it is important you have policies and procedures in place to protect them (and you).

You may need to review and update existing policies and procedures to reflect your Warm Room activities e.g., your safeguarding policy, code of conduct and risk assessments. Importantly, you will need to ensure those responsible for running and managing your Warm Room are familiar with your policies and procedures. This includes your volunteers.

The minimum policies and procedures you need for safe governance and running of the Warm Room are in the table opposite.

Policy and procedures (Minimum)	We have this in place and it is fit for purpose.	
	Yes	No
Safeguarding children and adults		
Warm Rooms Charter/ code of conduct for staff/ volunteers and guests		
Managing boundaries		
Health and Safety including: risk assessment, manual handling, first aid		
Fire risk assessment and procedures		
Photography/ filming policy (don't let people take photos of others)		
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion		
Recruitment and support of staff and volunteers		
Food hygiene, if applicable		

**Staff:** Do you have enough staff and volunteers to safely run your Warm Room? A number of factors will determine how many volunteers you need to manage your Warm Room, including capacity, fire and health & safety requirements as outlined within your risk assessment. It is however strongly recommended that you have a minimum of two volunteers whose role also includes 'on the door' meeting and greeting people, signing people in and out, and directing people, as well as making them aware of your Warm Room Charter.

Be clear on what staff and volunteer roles do and do not include. It is likely you are not there to be experts in benefits advice, counselling or other guidance, so help your staff and volunteers understand the limits of their roles.

Signpost any concerns direct to the Warm Rooms Lead and/or safeguarding contact for the organisation. You are responsible for recruiting, managing<sup>4</sup> and training<sup>5</sup> your staff and volunteers. Contact [DBS@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:DBS@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)<sup>6</sup> if you need guidance around DBS checks.

<sup>3</sup> Insurance and licences: [PPL PRS Ltd Filmbankmedia - Cinema For All TV Licence - TV Licensing](#)™

<sup>4</sup> Volunteer recruitment [Volunteer Suffolk – Be amazing. Be a volunteer](#)

If you need further advice regarding working with volunteers, please contact Janet Perry, Senior Manager Volunteering Development [janet.perry@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:janet.perry@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk) 01473 345389

<sup>5</sup> Training from CAS, [Free 'Bystander' training](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) or [DBS@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:DBS@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk) for DBS checks support

# A.R.M.C.H.A.I.R.S. Summary



Tick below to review your readiness to start your Warm Room.

	Yes	No
<b>All:</b> We are clear on who we can include and welcome to the Warm Room and have reviewed accessibility		
<b>Regular:</b> We have identified a suitable regularly available space for a Warm Room		
<b>Money:</b> We have sufficient funds to offer the Warm Room and/ or have identified how much extra we need and where we can apply for that funding		
<b>Comfortable:</b> The space is comfortable, welcoming, well equipped and appropriate for purpose		
<b>Health and Safety:</b> We have completed a review of our Health and Safety and it is fit for purpose		
<b>Assessments:</b> We have reviewed existing risk assessments and updated them for Warm Rooms		
<b>Insurance:</b> We have sufficient insurance and licences to cover Warm Rooms activities		
<b>Regulations:</b> We have reviewed our policies and procedures and they are fit for purpose and/ or have identified areas we need to cover and are working on this		
<b>Staff:</b> We have recruited suitable staff and volunteers in sufficient numbers and roles to cover the Warm Rooms service		

## Promote it! Don't forget to tell people about your Warm Room

It is important that you have clear messaging about where and when your Warm Room is open to the public.

You will want to ensure people know what you have on offer and manage their expectations from the start i.e., what facilities and activities will be available and what your Warm Room Charter is. Investment and resources will be required to promote your Warm Room i.e., social media, flyers and posters, and don't forget the power of 'word of mouth'.

Consider what activities you could be offering. It can help to promote and attract people to your Warm Room. Will it be as simple as offering newspapers, or will you be having local history speakers, health professionals dropping in, guest speakers, a book club, a Knit and Natter session? Not only can this help to attract people to the session but it also means that people can say they are going to a 'local history session' or a 'wildlife talk' rather than say they are going to a 'Warm Room'. It is a way of respecting the dignity of people using the Warm Room as well as offering interesting opportunities.



# Scenario planning

Here are a few scenarios you might encounter during the running of the Warm Room. Use them as a starting point for your discussions and make sure staff and volunteers are prepared for whatever the days may bring. People who attend the Warm Room may have differing needs and expectations of what they need. These scenarios are a useful place to start with your plans and preparations. We have also given some guidance about what you could do in the situations. [If you want to consider some more scenarios click here to download a few more.](#)

## Scenario 1:

You have a room filled with people from different backgrounds and with different cultural beliefs. A member of the group uses racist language and upsets others in the space.

### *How do you manage unacceptable behaviour?*

#### **What you could do to help...**

Have a clear behaviour Charter around respect and what is permissible. Set the tone for what is acceptable early on. Don't leave things to escalate. Also bear in mind who the behaviour or language affects. Is it a problem for you as you don't like swearing, but it is just a part of the other persons everyday language, or is it causing distress to others?

Are your personal boundaries the same and in tune with those of the Warm Room? How will you support staff and volunteers where this is not the case?



## Scenario 2:

You have a single parent with three small children and a baby, who need room to play and be noisy and an older guest who wants/needs a quieter space.

### *How do you manage these different needs?*

#### **What you could do to help...**

Have clear ground rules around respect and what is acceptable behaviour. Offer separate spaces for families, or play, chat and 'quiet zones' for those who want to read or be quiet. A bit like a common room and a library. Give people choice, if possible.

## Scenario 3:

A young single mum shares with a volunteer that she cannot deal with the pressure anymore and reveals she cannot feed her children.

### *How do you handle difficult conversations and provide appropriate support?*

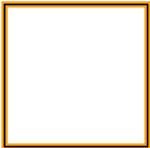
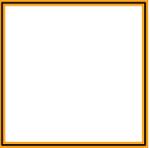
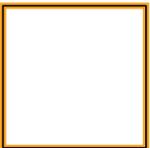
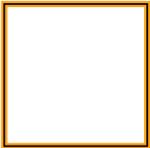
#### **What you could do to help...**

Ensure you have robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and make sure your safeguarding lead is contactable for guidance and support. Do not 'overreach' or overload yourself with trying to solve what is not within your role/ skills. Listen, reassure they have done the right thing in telling you and tell them you will get a member of staff to speak with them. Then make sure you signpost/ refer them appropriately. Remember you can use the Suffolk Warm Handover Scheme<sup>7</sup> which is an online referral process to support vulnerable customers and clients and help them access services that they may not be able to on their own.

<sup>7</sup> [Suffolk Information Partnership: Warm Handover Scheme](#)

## 2. Ready to open your doors

The day has finally come and you are ready to open your doors. Everything is ready and you have done all you can to be ready for the unexpected. Here are a few checks to go through, alongside any you have identified.

<p><b>Signs and posters are up including your Warm Room Charter and are displayed.</b></p> <p>The Charter is simple and clear ensuring the Warm Room is inclusive and welcoming. You have included what is unacceptable behaviour i.e., discrimination, harassment, victimisation; as well as rules regarding safeguarding i.e., prohibiting photography and who to speak to if they are concerned about their own or someone else's safety. Fire exits, toilets, 'no entry' areas etc. are clearly marked.</p> <p>Images used are inclusive and welcoming, showing a diverse group of people.</p> <p>If your funder has a requirement that you display certain information, it is on display.</p>	
<p><b>You have sufficient staff and volunteers to run the service safely</b></p> <p>As part of your risk assessment you have identified how many staff/volunteers you need to run the Warm Room.</p> <p>If you are short on volunteers and make the decision not to open (i.e., you are unable to find additional cover) you have considered how this is communicated. Further consideration may be needed if your building is open to the public. You have agreed how your front of house team manage this situation.</p> <p>You have enough staff/ volunteers so you can be aware of what may be happening when people aren't in the main room e.g. toilets are in another part of the building.</p>	
<p><b>You have a safe system to know who is in the building</b></p> <p>We have a system for signing people in and out and we are aware of who is where. (In an emergency situation e.g. fire evacuation it is vital to have this information. This could be as simple as a visitor book displayed at the entrance of your Warm Room which is managed by a volunteer).</p> <p>Staff/ volunteers who will also be the 'Meet and Greeters' know to make a note of any additional needs that may impact on a fire evacuation e.g. where people may need a Personal Evacuation Plan.</p> <p>Staff and volunteers also know how to monitor and assess if people are under the influence of alcohol or drugs and what action should be taken if they are. (Unless you are equipped to manage this behaviour think very carefully about allowing them in or allowing them to stay if they have taken the substances while in the Warm Room. If someone is under the influence of either or both consider how this impacts on the safety of others too).</p>	
<p><b>Staff and volunteers have a named Warm Rooms contact and know how to reach them</b></p> <p>Staff and volunteers are well briefed and have a named contact in case of an emergency or safeguarding referral.</p>	

# 3. Signposting

## Welfare Advice

[Infolink Cost of Living Support](#) – key contacts for support around food, fuel, finance and housing  
[Suffolk Local Welfare Assistance Scheme](#) – help for those experiencing financial hardship

## Safeguarding

[Safeguarding information](#) from Community Action Suffolk  
[Safeguarding policy and procedure support](#) from Community Action Suffolk  
[Safeguarding training](#) from Community Action Suffolk  
[#AreThey Safe Safeguarding campaign](#)  
[DBS Checks](#)  
[Enough: Help stop it – Bystander training from HM Government](#)  
[Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub](#)  
[Suffolk Safeguarding Adults Framework and referral agencies](#)

## Setting up a Space

[Rural Coffee Caravan – Warm Spaces](#) – support and mapping of warm spaces across Suffolk  
[Freecycle](#) – for furnishing  
[Gum Tree](#) – for furnishings  
[Safer Spaces](#) – adapting community spaces post COVID  
[Martin Lewis Warm Spaces Guide](#)  
[Suffolk Community Transport](#) – Connecting Communities, for assistance to get to Warm Rooms.  
[Volunteer Suffolk](#) – for help to recruit your volunteers  
[Cost of Living Support Leaflet](#) and [Poster](#)

## Community Action Suffolk – Example Policies and Procedures

[Organisation HealthCheck](#), [Organisation HealthCheck Plus](#), [Quality Standard](#)  
[Health & Safety: Example policy](#)  
[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Example Policy](#)

## Funding and Sustainability Support

[Community Action Suffolk Sustainability and Funding Advice](#)  
[Funding 4 Suffolk portal](#)  
[Suffolk Community Foundation](#)  
[Suffolk County Council External Grants Team](#)  
[Babergh & Mid Suffolk Grants Team](#)  
[East Suffolk Grants Team](#)  
[Ipswich Grants Team](#)  
[West Suffolk Grants Team](#)

## Accessibility

[Disability Etiquette](#)

## Health and Wellbeing

[Suffolk Mind](#)  
[Dementia Connect: Alzheimer's Society](#)  
[Suffolk Good Neighbour Network](#)

## Health and Safety

[Unison Coronavirus Guidance](#)  
[Reducing the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace](#)  
[Example Warm Rooms Risk Assessment: A Warm Welcome guide form Martin Lewis page 15](#)

## Other

[Suffolk Infolink](#)



# Example Warm Room Charter

✓ **You will get a warm welcome as well as a Warm Room.**

Every time you come to a Warm Room, you'll be given a warm welcome from any staff and volunteers.

✓ **Everyone is treated equally, with dignity and respect**

Everyone has a right to be warm, so everyone in a Warm Room will treat people with dignity and respect, and can expect to *be* treated with dignity and respect.

✓ **Everyone is welcome but not all behaviours are welcome**

Anyone behaving or speaking inappropriately may be asked to leave. No alcohol or illegal drugs can be consumed on the premises.

✓ **Your Warm Room is a safe space**

Your Warm Room will follow our safeguarding policy and procedure. If you are worried by something you see or hear please tell a member of our team, do not try and resolve it yourself.

If you are concerned about your own safety you can contact the Suffolk Team at Customer First on 0808 800 4005. In an emergency call 999.

If you are concerned about a child you can ring the Suffolk Safeguarding Team at Customer First on 0808 800 4005 or contact Childline on 0800 1111.

✓ **Making your Warm Room better**

If you've got ideas about improving your Warm Room please tell us!

✓ **Contact details:**