

# Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

26 January 2023

<b>Subject:</b>	Cost of living work 2022/23
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Public Health Lisa McNally
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Consultant in Public Health, Liann Brookes-Smith Liann_Brookes-Smith@sandwell.gov.uk





## 1 Recommendations

1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the Cost of Living programme.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

Information on what has been provided to the community of Sandwell.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well Providing people of Sandwell with support and information during the winter 2022/2023 as communities are impacted by the cost of living crisis.
	Strong resilient communities Providing people of Sandwell with guidance to support themselves and others during the winter 2022/2023 as communities are impacted by the cost of living crisis.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods



	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

## 4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The Public health team has put forward support for the community in a variety of areas to tackle the impacts of the cost of living increases during the winter months.

These included:

- Warm space grants
- Winter warm packs
- Cost of living champions
- Cost of living booklet.
- Supporting food banks and access to food.

### 4.1.1 Warm space grants

Public Health has agreed to provide a Grant to **Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)** to enable organisations to support the warm space charter.

No. of grants awarded: 34 Total value: £118,849

#### Sandwell Warm Spaces Charter

[https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200374/warm\\_spaces/4978/warm\\_spaces\\_charter](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200374/warm_spaces/4978/warm_spaces_charter)

*Stuart from SCVO said “this is the most successful and in demand grants process we’ve ever done. The pace and partnership working between public health and SCVO has been brilliant. The process received more bids in the first round than it ever has, from a wide range of organisations, including ones that have not been part of a funded council response before”*

Some comments that we've received as part of ongoing feedback:

*We had a Christmas sing-along with one of our volunteers playing the guitar. This was a lovely activity that people enjoyed very much.*

*We have seen a steady amount of people using the winter warmer .We have noticed that more men are using the service, then women.*



*Had a pianist come today to play and sing Christmas carols. The group were reminiscing about loved ones and past Christmases. A lovely time shared together. There were also sandwiches and cakes available. Several attendees live on their own and are in need of care and support.*

*Having a craft activity on our main communal table has really helped people connect. Even if they don't do the craft, it seems to be less pressure to 'talk' - although lots of natural chat happens!*

*This event is becoming increasingly popular and the free hot drinks make a big difference to people who are on tight budgets.*

*An elderly lady who's family came to the UK as refugees has started coming each week. She struggles with English but yesterday said to me: "Today I am happy. I am made happy because here are people with good hearts. I can sit and see people and they have good hearts. I am happy."*

#### **4.1.2. Winter warm packs**

Public Health ordered 600 winter warm packs, so far we have issued 536 packs, with 64 remaining due for distribution.

What was in the Pack:

- Socks
- thermal gloves
- 120 x 150 cm fleece blanket
- fleece scarf/neck warmer
- thermal hat
- insulated travel mug 420 ml

I wanted to share with you 3 resident's comments who got in touch regarding the winter warmth bags they had received.

- really grateful items came in use.
- I only needed a couple of the items, so I shared with my neighbour you could of blown me away cant thank the council enough.
- Can you pass on my gratitude for my gift I now use the throw instead of my heating, I make use of the neck warmer (scarf) and I have my hot drinks in the flask to keep them warmer also its nice to know the council are thinking of us never known it.



**Table 1: distribution of winter warm packs**

Date	Number of packs	Event / venue	Target Group	Name
05/12/2022	16	Just Straight Talk – West Bromwich	Those who access the warm space	Erinn Beech
05/12/2022	24	Millennium Centre, Friar Park	Must only go to people and families who need them	Mandy Williams
05/12/2022	12	Holy Trinity Church, Old Hill	Must only go to people and families who need them	Matt Hill
05/12/2022	12	Irish Community Association	Must only go to people and families who need them	Matt Hill
09/12/2022	16	Life in Community CIC	Must only go to people and families who need them	Irandeep Mann
09/12/2022	1	Brook Street Community Centre	Must only go to people and families who need them	Irandeep Mann
09/12/2022	1	Glebefields Library	Must only go to people and families who need them	Irandeep Mann
15/12/2022	8	Cllr Jalil	Must only go to people and families who need them	Caroline clarke
16/12/2022	40	Cllr Hartwell	Must only go to people and families who need them	Liann BrookesSmith
19/12/2022	56	Oldbury Library	These will go to all other library sites	Ricky Byrnes
21/12/2022	20	Smethwick Bearwood Community Hub	High foot fall location	Lyndsey Smalley
21/12/2022	20	Smethwick new beginnings	High foot fall location	Lyndsey Smalley
20/12/2022	15	Wednesbury community association	High foot fall location	Mandy Williams
20/12/2022	5	Wednesbury sons of rest	High foot fall location	Mandy Williams
20/12/2022	20	West Brom 4 community trust	High foot fall location	Lyndsey Smalley
20/12/2022	20	West Brom Dartmouth Park Cricket Club	High foot fall location	Ricky Byrnes
20/12/2022	20	Oldbury Brandhall community hub	High foot fall location	Matt Hill
20/12/2022	20	Oldbury St James's Church	High foot fall location	Matt Hill
22/12/2022	20	Tipton community association	High foot fall location	Matt Hill
20/12/2022	20	Tipton jubilee park	High foot fall location	Matt Hill
20/12/2022	20	Oldbury salvation army	Open over xmas	Matt Hill
20/12/2022	20	Lea brook Methodist church	Open over xmas	Matt Hill
20/12/2022	20	Jamia mosque anwar trust	Open over xmas	Ricky Byrnes
20/12/2022	20	Llieys	Open over xmas	Ricky Byrnes
03/01/2023	16	Wednesbury St Barts Hall	Open over xmas	Mandy Williams
11/01/2023	50	Cllr Khatun	Must only go to people and families who need them	Irandeep Mann

### 4.1.3 Cost of living champions

Following on from the COVID champions model which enabled Public health to win the national award and building on the information from the Sandwell Wellbeing survey, which showed that most residents will turn to friends and family for advice.

The launch of Cost of Living champions to enable every day citizens to become trained in making every contact count and using the social connections to educate and inform on what channels of support are available. Further sessions are planned across the NHS and local partners.

**Table 2: sessions of cost of living champions delivered so far.**

Total number of sessions delivered	12
Total number of presenters	7
Total number of attendees	153

### 4.1.4 Cost of living booklet.

information which contains potentially lifesaving advice and support. The cost of living booklet provided up to date information on support available across the borough in order to reduce the impact of the cost of living increases. It was a reference guide for our residents.

The booklet has so far been distributed to:



- 134,000 residents
- 2,000 care home residents
- 500 copies for public buildings (including libraries)
- 100 assigned for HR event for Sandwell Council employees, 250 assigned to Lion Farm Action Centre, 50 to Vidal Lee, Community Transport, 300 to Rood End Medical Centre
- 500 for our public health development officers to distribute to other key locations in the six towns.

An easy read version of the document was also created for use by Sandwell Visually Impaired (SVI) which will work with voice screen reader software.

Furthermore a digital version was created:

<https://view.publitas.com/renaissance-creative/23394-sandwell-cost-of-living-booklet/page/1>

We also gave residents the option request the booklet in other languages via Sandwell Council website:

[https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200371/cost\\_of\\_living\\_help/5012/sandwell\\_cost\\_of\\_living\\_booklet](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200371/cost_of_living_help/5012/sandwell_cost_of_living_booklet)

#### 4.1.5 Supporting the foodbank network

We offered a top up grant of £10,000 to foodbanks to support the foodbank network, during difficult times the network had received lower donations and were looking to cut back on their food and hygiene supplies, usual need is £2000 per month to keep stocks at the levels needed. £10,000 was awarded to the Black County Foodbanks, for use on their Sandwell sites only and other food banks have been offered partnership to share this resources as an when they need it.

#### 4.1.6 Update from the Neighbourhood Partnership Team

There have been 83,495 visits to library Warm Spaces since October 2022, 10,761 hot drinks served, 736 devices charged there were 36,632 visits during December 2022

Our libraries opened for a total of 150 hours over the Christmas and New Year period. This included at least one library being open on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day

- 1,879 customers used a Warm Space in our libraries during this time
- 99 customer enquiries were dealt with by staff
- 1,450 hot drinks were served and 120 devices were charged
- 37 customers came to Central Library on Christmas Day



- 34 food parcels were handed out from local food banks
- Donations of Christmas presents and jumpers were distributed
- Staff supported customers with enquiries including homelessness and emergency food provision

#### Examples of events:

- Live music events
- Family theatre
- Christmas grotto events,
- Author talks
- Learning in libraries,
- School class visits
- Black Country Toy Appeal
- Stand United - Curry Kitchen

Training has been arranged for all warm space providers, to include voluntary sector partners. The training was delivered by our own welfare rights team and with citizens advice bureau. Training was offered in person and online with feedback being extremely positive. Providers of warm spaces feel much more able to support tenants and residents that attend warm space provision.

Warm spaces have provided a vital and lifeline for many tenants and residents of all ages and backgrounds. We have people who work visiting them on their way home to have a hot drink, stay warm a little and have social interaction they don't usually get as they live alone or their personal circumstances mean they can't look to other things in the area to socialise whether this is financial reasons or the lack of amenities for their interest. We have single parents, families, unemployed, part time workers, people with disabilities in attendance of all races and religions.

We have supported the development of a "friendship group" of residents that has formed via the warm space provision. They meet most days for a chat, watch tv, play a board game then on days where further provision is available they all go up to the next warm space continue the chat, watch a film and grab a light bite to eat before returning home at 7pm when the venue closes. This has presented opportunity to refer into other services when part of their conversation to support with things like food, utilities, free school meals, HAF and support with referrals to get the help needed. Ie. Local pantry, LWP,





Water company debt support and discounts, LEAP energy advice referrals for support with white goods, energy efficiency In their home and free money saving devices.

We have taken the opportunity to use communal spaces as additional warm spaces in one of our high-rise blocks with the forming of a tenant group and the effectiveness of this in tackling issues of isolation and supporting each other with information on benefits, managing traumas and finding solutions to feelings of feeling unsafe and vulnerable.

Warm spaces are an invaluable asset to our community and provide not just warmth and a hot drink but a sense of belonging and equality to those who use them

## Food Network Info

The neighbourhood partnerships team have lead on the development of several food networks and further work is now being developed to support this. We will also be supporting the development of a boroughwide network to ensure that resources are managed well.

### 4.1.7 Response to previous SNAC recommendations

- (1) that Directors ensure that the marketing of support services is strengthened; including making use of multi-media, billboards, communications to parents via schools and a roadshow event.

This was sent out as a Herald Cost of Living centre piece, Cost of Living booklet to all households, at many community areas, on line and in multiple languages.

- (2) that Directors produce a map of support services via location and geographical coverage and share this through a range of media including print and online.

This was sent out in the Herald Cost of Living centre piece, Cost of Living booklet to all households, and available online



- (3) that Directors investigate ways to better coordinate the existing foodbank network in Sandwell to ensure best use of available food resources.

This was completed through the neighbours link work and the addition top up funding.

- (4) that the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board hold discussions with representatives from the Directorate of Public Health to discuss period poverty and access to sanitary products.

This has been ongoing with schools, we have also rolled out a programme of poverty proofing schools which means that schools are more inclusive of children from more deprived background. Such as giving notice on financial requests for school trips, allowing children to attend school events without asking for financial input and language used.

## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The various programmes have been supported by the public health budget and wider council funds.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	None.
<b>Risk:</b>	None.
<b>Equality:</b>	Those who are most likely to have been impacted by inequality at this time have be prioritised and targeted.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	We have supported improved health and wellbeing during this difficult time for our communities.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The support has been provided by local charities and organisations.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	Having hubs/space open to the public for longer hours will have had an impact on the energy use and climate impact.

## 6 Appendices

Cost of Living Public Health Presentation

## 7. Background Papers

None.

