

## A Warm Welcome

As the increases to the cost of living are still putting pressure on household budgets we are looking to see how parishes can once again support people in their communities this winter.

Last year a number of churches opened their doors to create welcoming spaces and found that as much as the warmth was needed, it was the company and companionship that had people coming back. Out of these simple projects, communities are strengthened, and friendships have flourished.

Here are some ideas to consider if you are wondering how to support those who are alone and isolated this winter.

- Find out what is already happening locally, talk to other churches, local councillors/council and support agencies. It is good to work in collaboration and it saves duplicating something that is an already established project. You are more likely to be successful if filling a gap in provision.
- Consider you location, churches that are tucked away or not easily accessible via public transport may have difficulty relying on passing footfall, but it may be next to a school or be accessible to communities that have specific needs.
- Can you build on something that your church is already running? Can an after Mass coffee turn into a lunch, or a evening social include some food or be run more often?
- Provide different types of activity – can you run a games or craft afternoon or film night. Open a book corner or start a book club? Offer charging facilities and access to WiFi and computers for digital needs and maybe have a 'digital champion' who can help troubleshoot any issues.
- Collect information of other services available locally to signpost where appropriate, find out how people can access support for emergency food and energy provision.
- Be prepared to adapt as you learn what people need.
- Don't be worried about no one turning up – it is better to open and not be needed than not open.

Need more inspiration? – watch this introduction video from [Warm Welcome Spaces](#)

If you decide to start up a warm space (or are already running one), we'd love to hear from you. We can help with template risk assessments, safeguarding best practice, marketing, fundraising, food hygiene and pass on ideas for food and activities. If you would like further guidance and support or just chat through ideas, please get in touch at [caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) Or visit our website at [www.caritasportsmouth.org.uk](http://www.caritasportsmouth.org.uk)

## Church Beyond Walls