WARM WELCOMES 2026/2027 GRANT FUNDING GUIDELINE

About Warm Welcomes Grant

Lewisham Local, working in partnership with Lewisham Council for the fifth consecutive year, invites applications from eligible community organisations to deliver Warm Welcome spaces during winter 2026/27.

The Warm Welcomes programme supports Lewisham residents experiencing the cost-of-living crisis, fuel poverty and social isolation by providing free, safe and welcoming community spaces where people can stay warm, connect with others and access information, advice and support.

For winter 2026/27, £92,000 will be distributed through an open, transparent and proportionate application process, with 16 Main Grants of £5,750 each available to eligible community organisations.

The remaining is intended to support the subsequent transition towards a new neighbourhood-based model of year-round provision. This funding is separate from the winter grant application process.

Future neighbourhood anchor model

Lewisham Council intends to develop a new year-round model of neighbourhood-based support from 2027/28, bringing together Warm Welcomes during winter and Cool Spaces during summer.

The future model is expected to be organised around selected neighbourhood anchor centres: trusted, accessible and established venues that can provide a consistent core offer throughout the year, supported where appropriate by a wider network of community spaces.

The 2026/27 Warm Welcomes programme will maintain essential winter provision while generating learning to inform the development of this future model. Organisations are encouraged to strengthen partnerships, connect residents with wider support services and identify opportunities to work collaboratively to meet local needs.

Receiving a Warm Welcomes grant in 2026/27 does not guarantee selection or funding as a future neighbourhood anchor space. The selection of future anchor centres will be a separate process led by the Council, informed by transparent criteria, evidence of neighbourhood need and consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Current and prospective providers will have opportunities to engage with the development of the future model and understand the proposed approach. Organisations that are not selected as anchor centres may still contribute to the wider network through partnerships, specialist services, referrals and other community activities.

Warm Welcomes spaces 2026/2027

A warm welcome space is a free, safe and inclusive place where residents can spend time outside their home, keep warm, socialise and access practical support without needing to spend money or obtain a referral.

Spaces may offer hot drinks, nutritious food, social activities, games, creative sessions, community meals, digital support, advice and signposting to other services. Activities should reflect local needs and the strengths of the communities they serve.

Warm Welcome spaces are also important route into wider support, helping residents connect with services relating to food insecurity, welfare benefits, debt advice, health and wellbeing and other cost of living disadvantages.

Through this programme in 2026/2027 we aim to:

- Provide free, warm and welcoming spaces outside the home where residents can spend time without needing to purchase anything.
- Support residents to stay warm, healthy and well during winter.
- Reduce loneliness and social isolation by creating opportunities for social connection and participation.
- Provide free activities, refreshments and opportunities for individuals and families to come together.
- Offer safe, accessible and inclusive spaces that respect residents' dignity and individual needs.
- Help residents access information, advice and support relating to the cost of living, food, welfare benefits, debt, health and other relevant services.
- Strengthen connections between community organisations and local support services.
- Build on existing community provision to support the council's longer- term ambition for neighbourhood-based Warm Welcomes

Who we aim to support

We recognise that local community groups who are rooted in their local communities are best placed to reach and support people who may be most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Local community groups are also impacted by the increased costs especially during winter.

Preference will be given to organisation that:

- Established organisations that already provide warm, welcoming spaces where residents can connect with others, access information and advice, and receive signposting to relevant support services.

- Organisations operating within or supporting community strategic anchor settings, such as neighbourhood hubs, community libraries and dedicated spaces for specific demographic groups, which play an active role in community outreach, referrals and connecting residents to relevant support.
- Organisation with clear plans to sustain, develop and increase their capacity to support residents.
- Have experience working with residents and communities experiencing inequity and affected by the cost-of-living crisis, including children and young people, racially minoritised communities, disabled people, people experiencing financial or educational disadvantage, women and girls, migrants and carers.
- Demonstrate a commitment to partnership working by building on existing relationships or developing new connections with local community groups, charities, faith groups, voluntary organisations, practitioners and relevant services to strengthen the Warm Welcomes offer and better meet residents' needs.
- Identify opportunities for collaborative delivery, including joint activities, visiting services, referrals, outreach, volunteer support, training and sharing facilities or resources, to reduce social isolation, reach residents facing barriers to support, and inform future year-round neighbourhood provision.

Who can apply for the funding?

This funding programme is aimed at Lewisham-based organisations within the voluntary, community and faith sector. The following organisations are eligible to apply:

- A constituted group with a volunteer management committee with a minimum of three unrelated members that meets regularly (at least three times per year)
- Registered charity with a board of trustees
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Community Benefit Society
- Not-for-profit company such as Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Interest Company (CIC) with minimum of three unrelated directors and with no one director with more than 50% control

Who can't apply:

- Organisations that are aimed at generating profits
- Organisations that carry out religious activities that do not provide a wider public benefit
- Organisations that carry out political activities
- Individual applicants
- Organisations organising trips abroad
- Activities taking place outside of the Lewisham Borough
- Public bodies to carry out their statutory obligations
- Privately owned and profit-distributing companies or limited partnerships

Your organisation must:

- Provide existing community activities or services within Lewisham, which are of benefit to the residents of Lewisham
- Have a formal constitution or set of rules
- Have a bank account requiring at least two unrelated signatories
- Operate without undue restrictions on membership, subject to the organisation's capacity and established criteria
- Projects previously funded by Lewisham Local must be up-to-date on their project monitoring

Note: Applications based solely on the intention to set up a new Warm Welcome Space will not be eligible. Priority will be given to organisations with existing/established provision and a proven track record of delivering welcoming community spaces and support to residents.

We aim to fund around four Warm Welcome spaces in each neighbourhood, including a community library or hub where possible. However, we will retain flexibility to support specialist organisations that reach vulnerable or underserved communities across the borough, including refugees and asylum seekers, to help ensure equitable access to provision.

Applicants should demonstrate:

- An established connection with the local community they intend to support.
- An understanding of local needs and existing provision.
- The organisational capacity to deliver a safe, welcoming and consistent service throughout the winter programme.
- Appropriate safeguarding, financial management, health and safety arrangements.
- A commitment to inclusion, accessibility and treating residents with dignity and respect.
- A willingness to collaborate with other community organisations and relevant support services.
- A willingness and interest in engaging in the transition towards providing year-round support and services for residents.

Application Timeline

Application Live: 30th October, Friday 2026
Deadline: 25th November, Wednesday 2026 12 noon
Applicants will be notified by 10th December 2026
Project Duration: 17th December 2026, or no later than 4th January 2027-31st March 2027

How much funding is available?

A total of £92,000 will be distributed through an open, transparent and proportionate process to fund approximately 16 Main Grants of £5,750 each. Grants will support eligible community organisations to deliver Warm Welcome spaces during winter 2026/27.

Funded spaces must be open at least three days per week during the winter programme, (commencement date should be 17 December 2026, but no later than 4 January 2027) providing a consistent, safe and welcoming environment where residents can access social activities, connect with others and receive information and signposting to relevant support services.

Warm Welcome Facilities/Activities

To ensure as much continuity of provision across the borough, your Warm Welcome project must be/have:

- Be based in Lewisham
- Open to all and not require a referral*exceptions maybe considered for organisations due to appropriate safeguarding, safety or wellbeing considerations particularly those working exclusively with specific or targeted group
- Fully accessible for wheelchair users
- Possibility of warm drinks and a hot, nutritious meal
- Access to drinking water
- Access to toilets
- Free Wi-Fi
- Capacity for at least 25+ seated people at once
- Capacity, willingness and proven track record in hosting and delivering additional wrap around services such as advice and information services. Examples may include staff coordinators providing advice, social prescribing signposting and digital skills, distributing the 'Worrying About Money' Leaflet, attending training to provide signposting, or inviting external partners to come and provide these services.
- Able to work to ensure those in the most need of a Warm Welcome space will hear about your space services.

All awarded organisations must also agree to:

- Providing social activities between the project delivery period. Examples could include board games, music, exercise, arts and crafts etc. Social activities can take place in your premises, as well as outdoor activities, for example activities for leisure, recreation, sport, play and cultural activities.
- Provide monthly monitoring reports detailing the number of people engaged, the types of support accessed, and any emerging needs identified. Reports will be submitted by the 5th of each month between January to April 2027 with a **final comprehensive report due by 15th April 2027.**
- Commit to attending online meet-up sessions with other Warm Welcomes grantees and participating in consultations to help shape the transition towards a year-round Warm Welcomes model.

- Encourage service users to fill up the visitor forms
- Be open for visits by Lewisham Council and Lewisham Local Team

What can the funding be used for?

- Staff
- Volunteer Expenses
- Utility Bills
- Refreshments. We encourage groups to offer healthy refreshments and where possible purchased from Lewisham based businesses
- Publicity and printing costs
- Activity Costs
- Other reasonable costs associated with running a warm centre

Groups can utilise up to a maximum of 15% of their grant towards overheads and management. A breakdown of these expected overheads should be included in the application.

Please note: Funding should not be used to cover **100% of any single cost item**. We encourage a balanced budget that demonstrates contributions across multiple areas

What can't use the funding be used for?

- Capital costs (except for equipment that is directly needed for the delivery of the project)
- Costs incurred before the warm welcomes start date or after 31 March 2027

Decisions and Assessment

Applications will be assessed by Lewisham Local trustees, internal staff and representatives from Lewisham Council. Assessors will score applications against the published assessment criteria and discuss their scores to support a fair, consistent and transparent decision-making process.

Funding decisions will consider the application scores, the programme's aims and priorities, and the funding available. A final decision-making panel will meet to review the assessments and agree on the funding awards.

Marking

The following marking scheme will be used to assess each section of the application form

1 = Failed to provide confidence that the proposal will meet the requirements.
2 = A poor response with reservations. The application lacks convincing detail with risks that the proposal will not be successful in meeting all the requirements.

3 = Meets the requirements. The application generally meets the requirements but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.
4 = A good response that meets the requirements with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding.
5 = An excellent, comprehensive response that exceeds the requirements.

Alongside the scoring criteria, the key question asked of each application will include the following. Each response should be structured to fit within a 250-word limit

Question 1: What do you hope to achieve with the funding? *Please describe:*

- How will your project meet the aims of the Warm Welcomes programme?
- What impact do you expect your project to have and how will you measure its success?

Question 2: What is your organisation track record and experience to deliver this project? *Please describe:*

- What experience do you have delivering Warm Welcomes or similar projects?
- What systems are in place to ensure your project can operate effectively?
- What were the key outcomes of your previous Warm Welcomes delivery?

Question 3: How will your organisation build partnerships and community connections to strengthen its Warm Welcomes offer? *Please describe:*

- What existing and or planned partnerships and how they will benefit residents?
- How collaboration will help reach residents, respond to local needs and connect people to appropriate support?
- Opportunities to develop partnerships and shared resources to strengthen provision and support future sustainability

Question 4: What activities will be provided through this project? *Please describe:*

- Please outline the activities and services you plan to offer (e.g. hot drinks, meals, advice, games, social events, or outdoor activities) including how often and your planned opening days and hours
- How will you ensure that residents are aware of the programme and engage with the space?

Question 5: What local needs have you identified in your community/neighbourhood* and how will your project respond to them? *Please describe:*

- How is your organisation rooted in the community and how has lived experience, or community feedback has shaped your understanding of local needs?
- What provision already exists locally and how your project will complement and build on it?
- How you will you work with local organisations and partners to respond to unmet needs?

Question 6: Who is your target audience? *Please describe:*

- Who will your project support and how many residents do you expect to reach?

- How will you prioritise and engage residents experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage?
- How will you ensure your service is inclusive, accessible and respect residents' dignity?

Question 7: Risks Assessments

- What potential risks have been identified and how it will be mitigated? (e.g. safeguarding, health and safety, financial)?

Question 8: Budget

- Please provide a detailed breakdown of costs
- How does your budget represents value for money and is proportionate to your planned activities and the number of residents you expect to support.

Transition to Year-Round provision

Please note: This section is not scored and is for information purposes only at this stage. Additional support cannot be guaranteed, and project delivery must not be reliant on these additional inputs.

What additional in-kind support (e.g. expert hours, donated resources, equipment or access to facilities) would help your organisation transition to and sustain year-round provision? Please outline any specific support needs.

Ongoing Support for Warm Welcomes

Lewisham Local will offer a variety of support (e.g. fundraising support, training, events, resources, connections to peer support through colleagues working on the Warm Welcomes). A Warm Welcomes Network will be set up for centres to share experiences, updates, seek advice and support. Additional support provided by Lewisham Local will include:

- Support to find volunteers- volunteering@lewishamlocal.com
- Develop or link to food provision- goodfood@lewishamlocal.com

Fundraising and Capacity-Building Support through the Lewisham Neighbourhood Network: Please see the attached brochure* for information about fundraising support available through the neighbourhood ward or programme. It also includes details of staff you can contact for advice and support with fundraising or building your organisation's capacity.

Support your applications

Q&A Session will be held online on 9th November at 11am to answer any questions that prospective applicants might have. Please register to attend here

Process

- Complete the application form by 25th November 2026, 12 noon.
- All applicants to provide a copy of the organisation's safeguarding and health and safety policy, a copy of the organisation's public liability insurance and a copy of the organisation's Food Hygiene Certificate (if applicable) upon submission of application
- CICs will be asked to provide copies of their Community Interest Statement, details of the Asset Lock included in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and a copy of the latest annual community interest report upon submission of application
- Constituted groups will be asked to provide a list of the volunteer management committee members and evidence that the committee meets on a regular basis upon submission of their application form.
- Successful applicants will be asked to read, sign and return a Terms and Conditions (T&C's) form along with bank details
- Upon receipt of the signed T&Cs Lewisham Local *will endeavour to transfer funds no later than 14 working days upon receiving your T&C agreement.*
- Lewisham Local will get back to applicants no later than 10th December, to confirm if their application was successful. Payments will be made within 14 working days, provided that due diligence and Terms and Conditions have been completed
- Lewisham Local will transfer the grant in two instalments for amounts above £5000
- Organisations must be willing to have their service details included on the online and printed warm welcomes map to help residents access support. Exceptions may be made for services that operate exclusively through referrals or are restricted to specific demographic groups.
- Successful applicants will be required to adhere to the fund's monitoring and reporting requirements including online meetings. This will include submitting a final impact report outlining how the funding was used, the activities delivered, and the impact achieved for residents supported.
- Applicants should ensure they have appropriate systems in place to collect monitoring information throughout the project delivery period, while maintaining confidentiality and complying with relevant data protection requirements.
- Successful organisations will also be asked to provide publicly accessible examples of their work (e.g. case studies, photographs where appropriate, and blog posts) to help promote the work of Lewisham Local. Organisations must also be willing to share learning and reflections from the project to inform and improve future ways of working.
- Please ensure that all photographs are taken and shared with appropriate consent and that permission has been obtained for their use in reports, on social media, and in other publicity materials.
- A commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Expression of Interest for Warm Welcomes Steering Committee

We will support the Council to co-design the future Warm Welcomes model with residents, community organisations and stakeholders, building on the Community and Resident Steering Group to reflect local needs and Lewisham's diverse communities.

We are recruiting members for the Warm Welcomes Steering Group to help shape the programme beyond Winter 2026/27. Members will be remunerated to attend a minimum one-day workshop (date TBC) and share their experiences and priorities.

Working with the Council, we would develop transparent criteria for selecting neighbourhood anchor centres, based on local need, accessibility, community reach, safeguarding, organisational capacity and sustainable year-round provision.

Eligibility Criteria:
Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Lewisham resident who has been a service user of a Warm Welcome Space
- You are working in an organisation who are a previous or current Warm Welcomes Grantee
- Your organisation is based in Lewisham and has collaborated with Warm Welcomes spaces previously
- Only 18 years and above are eligible to apply

We are actively seeking diverse representation across our communities.

If you wish to be part of the Warm Welcomes Steering Group, please complete the form and submit your application by 30th December 2026.