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WRCC Warm Hubs – Organiser's Checklist

1. INTRODUCTION

WRCC, with support from Cadent, has been running the Warm Hubs project since December 2020 and the cost of living increases mean that this model is even more relevant to our communities in Warwickshire and Solihull.

This Organiser's Checklist is a guide to helping you set up a Warm Hub to help people in your community. You can find more information about Warm Hubs on our website or please contact us.

As part of the Warm Hubs Network, you will have free membership and regular contact with our charity's Warm Hubs team. We will keep you informed of new developments and funding opportunities and you will receive a range of free energy and safety resources to distribute to your communities.

2. WHAT IS A WARM HUB?

- A Warm Hub is a safe, warm and welcoming place where people can meet regularly. It is held in an accessible venue, which may be a community centre, village hall or any other building available for residents' use.
- A Warm Hub provides hot drinks and refreshments. This could be as simple as coffee, tea, biscuits or cakes, or might be a hot snack or a cooked meal.
- A Warm Hub helps reduce loneliness and isolation and provides another means to check in with vulnerable people in a community. It is especially helpful for people who are finding it harder to stay warm due to inadequate heating at home or increasing energy costs.
- A Warm Hub provides users with information about energy efficiency and home safety and helps signpost users to other services that can offer support. Informal visits from relevant support organisations are also encouraged.
- A Warm Hub is community-led and runs on a not-for-profit basis by a community group or organisation. Everyone attending a Warm Hub - organisers, other volunteers and attendees - is treated with kindness, respect and dignity.

There is a lot of flexibility in the Warm Hubs model! Whether you want to run a coffee morning or a breakfast/lunch club, an event supporting young parents or a residents' association, a repair cafe or a cooking group, an after-school club or a seated exercise class...or something else. It's up to you to choose an activity that meets your community's needs.



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3. RUNNING ACTIVITIES AT A WARM HUB

People should be offered hot refreshments at any Warm Hub. This can be as simple as tea, coffee, biscuits or cakes in a community café-type setting.

Basic refreshments would ideally be free. You may be able to collaborate with local shops or supermarkets that can provide free or reduced-cost supplies. If resources do not stretch this far, donations may be requested, or a nominal entrance charge made (we recommend no more than £1.00) to cover your reasonable cost. However, if someone cannot afford to pay such a charge, they should not be prevented from attending.

If you wish to provide a hot snack or meal and need to charge for this to cover your reasonable costs, that may also appeal to some attendees. Consider, though, whether the amount you want to charge is likely to deter people from being able to attend the Warm Hub. And if you are planning to offer prepared food, you must ensure that you provide appropriate training for anyone preparing or handling food. Level 2 Food Hygiene courses are available online at affordable prices. You should also contact your local authority to determine whether you are required to be registered as a food business. More information is available from the Food Standards Agency: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/getting-ready-to-start-your-food-business> and <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events>

This does not need to be a complex process and it is of course important to have appropriate protections in place for hub attendees. Best practice is to contact your local Environmental Health team to get the necessary advice for your event: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/trading-standards-business-advice/food-safetystandards-advice/3 and <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/environment-and-animals/food-safety-businesses>.

Your event could also include access to Wi-Fi, charging points, board games, cards, second-hand books, magazines, craft activities, etc. If your internet connection is good, could you offer online activities?

Information about managing energy and other costs and details of external support organisations should be available. However, this should be on a "light touch" basis - attendees should not feel such advice being forced upon them. WRCC can help to signpost you to other organisations who may be able to attend on certain days to support residents, e.g. Act on Energy, mobile libraries, NHS prescribers, Citizens Advice advisers, etc.



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If you want to focus on specific activities for the Warm Hub, such as repair clubs, healthy cooking, exercise groups or activities for children, consider relevant training and safeguarding requirements (see below).

4. CHOOSING YOUR WARM HUB VENUE

A Warm Hub must provide attendees with a warm, safe, welcoming and easily accessible room or space in a hall, community centre or other building.

If you are using your own community centre, village hall, or other space, then hopefully, you already have risk assessments and other arrangements in place. Village halls and community centres can get further support from the Halls Together service. WRCC operates this service with our partners in Leicestershire & Rutland. Halls Together has excellent resources concerning:

- Insurance
- VAT on energy costs
- Recruiting and managing volunteers
- Hiring conditions
- Safeguarding

and many more. You can contact [Halls Together](#) by e-mail: halls@ruralcc.org.uk or join our [Halls Together Facebook](#) group.

If you are hiring a space, carefully study the venue's hiring conditions. These will describe limits on numbers and may restrict certain activities or require hirers to have other arrangements in place. The venue's insurance policy may cover you, but check this beforehand.

If you are running any event, you must consider health and safety issues and should also complete a risk assessment. There is helpful guidance online at the [Health & Safety Executive](#) (HSE) and we can help guide you further along with our partner, Halls Together.

Check how accessible the room is for people with mobility issues. How many people are likely to attend and can the space accommodate these numbers? Also, find out what other events may be running at the same time.

Consider how people can get to the Warm Hub. Is parking available and whether there is reliable local transport. Are people able to car-share, or could you book a community transport service to help residents attend such as [WRCC's Back & 4th buses](#)?



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5. ORGANISING AND RUNNING A WARM HUB

Firstly, someone needs to be responsible for running the Warm Hub. This could be volunteers or paid staff, or a combination of both. Volunteers should have a role description and paid staff, a job description. Halls can get more information about recruiting volunteers or managing volunteers and paid staff from [Halls Together](#).

Volunteers or paid staff should receive any training necessary to carry out their work. Training can be “on the job” or a more formal training course. Contact [WRCC Warm Hubs](#) for further advice regarding training for the voluntary and community sector if you have questions about this – we may be able to arrange something or direct you to other training advisors and providers.

All volunteers and paid staff should be made aware of the health and safety arrangements, including the content of the risk assessment. You should also consider safeguarding and, if you are dealing with vulnerable adults or children and young people, you should consider having staff and volunteers DBS checked. Volunteers of charities may be eligible for free DBS checks (click [here](#) for further details). ACRE has published an excellent information sheet about safeguarding, available from [Halls Together](#).

Finally, you should produce a budget for the Warm Hub activity. Be realistic about your costs and include hall hire, refreshments and any additional event support you wish to provide. Explore funding options such as WRCC’s Warm Hub Grant. Halls Together can also provide advice on available funding.

6. ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO ATTEND A WARM HUB

You must ensure your target community is aware of your new Warm Hub. Word of mouth is the best (and cheapest) option and involving local people in your plans early usually pays dividends later. It is worth thinking about other tools to let people know what you are doing and how they can access the Warm Hub.

If your community has a Facebook or other online group, make sure you post details there and on any other relevant social media. If you have a local parish or church magazine, this often has excellent reach. And don't forget leaflets and noticeboards in the community. Send information to your local newspaper and radio stations, including community radio. Contact [WRCC Warm Hubs](#) if you would like further advice on promoting your event.

Consider how you might reach the people most isolated or likely to struggle with loneliness, isolation, access to fresh food or heating their home. Sometimes a friendly, direct invitation is all that is needed!



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Special events might also act as great publicity and a good reason for people to get involved. Could you put on a subsidised opening lunch, show a sporting event or arrange a talk from someone about a local issue?

WRCC will maintain a list of Warm Hubs and a [Network Map](#) showing locations of Warm Hubs and Community Hubs on our website, so anyone searching for a Warm Hub activity can find their local Warm Hub.

Your town or parish council will be keen to support initiatives that keep people safe and warm during the winter – it may be worth involving them in the development of your plans.

7. AND FINALLY ...

There is certainly a lot to think about, but the important thing is to focus on the benefit to your local community. We are all feeling the increase in the cost of living, and Warm Hubs aim to offer an additional line of support to people struggling to stay safe and warm.

The bottom line is that you are not alone! Please contact us if you have any questions.

Website: www.wrccrural.org.uk/wrcc-warm-hubs

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