



“WARM BANKS”/ WARM SPACES/HUBS. HOW COULD THE CHURCH RESPOND?

Thinking of Setting up a “Warm-Bank” in your church/ hall/ community? Here are some things to think about. We are grateful to Jubilee-plus.org for allowing other organisations to use the well articulated blog content: <https://www.jubilee-plus.org/blog/1160/warm-banks-six-principles-to-consider/>).

There are also some steps you could take. Throughout it all, we want to avoid any stigma to be attached to those who may be seeking help. We want to create places where people feel genuinely welcomed and want to visit. So, you may want to think about how genuine community can be built as you gather.

Warm-banks

Churches have got the buildings and some of them are even warm. Yet, is responding to this problem as simple as creating ‘warm banks’?

As well as campaigning for fairer systems and more affordable cost of living, I think the best efforts of church’s lie in how we place community at the heart of how we respond.

Survival mode

Part of the pandemic legacy has left many churches in survival mode. We’ve learned to function in the space of immediate need and response. Many of us are still recovering and are still exhausted.

With growing need, paying attention to our wellbeing is vital. Finding sustainable responses is a key part of this.

Many churches are tiring of models of social action that simply add an extra layer of welfare provision to our creaking system. When the focus is too much on need, it can fail to offer any social or spiritual transformation.

Building on assets

A number of churches have found more resonant approaches in asset-based community development [the ABCD approach is about coming together with the community and identifying and making use of the assets already available in the community. Those assets include people, place-based community resources, institutions, connections, etc]; a model that [also] honours the gifts and skills of each person.

This form of approach is harder to do than simply giving out material resources. It requires cultivating assets and drawing out the strengths of others. It puts the strengths of people and communities central, rather than their deficits or needs.

Six principles of participation

- 1. Remember these forms of poverty are a chronic issue.** This makes our response different to that of a crisis. It means we must think about the sustainability of our response. If we predict these interventions are still needed in 3 years time how would that change what we do?
- 2. Think beyond food and warmth.** We must consider how any response creates opportunities for building reciprocity. Let's view those we seek to help as participants rather than passive recipients. In turn, that will lead us to grow places to meet, eat and create with others. We have far more than a building! We can offer something better than spending time at Wetherspoon's.
- 3. Think collaboratively.** Start conversations about this now. This is a nationwide problem and is going nowhere. Talk to others in and outside church who are concerned. Coordinate and work in partnership where possible.
- 4. Be mindful of power.** Everyone likes to see themselves as a problem-solver and the hero of a situation; and the Church is no different. But I don't like feeling as if I'm 'a problem to be fixed'; no-one does. At a time when people's dignity is being stripped, create opportunities for sharing skills and time, so we are tackling this issue together.
- 5. Make it a place of participation.** This is different to just hosting. It's less 'How can we help?' and more, 'Great to see you. Can you help put out the chairs?' Make the bar to contribute as low as possible.
- 6. Think 'how can people bring their gifts?'** Games, workshops, music, activities? Think wellbeing and mental health.

Welfare or community?

Giving out resources to meet needs is easier than properly involving people. But too often, these approaches fuel the problem rather than address the root causes. It is worth thinking carefully as to what you most want to do: distribute welfare or build community?

Building community means developing strong relationships and a shared vision to co-create a different kind of space. This approach is costly in terms of time and effort but it often leads to richer relationships and transformation.

Givers and receivers

There is huge value in running community initiatives in congruence with the outcomes you are hoping for. Community is hard and messy, but mutuality and participation honour the God-given dignity that everyone has.

If we do this well, we show that our churches are places where we all get to take part, as both givers and receivers. In doing so, we reflect the grace and truth that God offers everyone.

Written by Corin Pilling, UK director for [Sanctuary](#) (this post originally appeared on the [Grace + Truth blog](#)).

Some practical steps you might want to take

So, can you...?

- Pray with others for God's leading and guiding in this endeavour. How does this initiative shape/reshape the focus of the church?
- Contact your local school, library, G.P surgery, neighbouring church, faith group, food bank, etc to find out what they are thinking or doing.
- Contact your local councillor to find out what they know and/or can offer.
- Consider how you might identify what the key needs and times are in the community.
- Start small and sustainable? Signpost to other groups so that what you are offering is part of a larger response (across the diocese and borough).
- Consider how you might time your warm space to maximise the benefit of a church/ hall space you have that is already warm.
- Think about volunteering/ partnering with a group that is already launching an initiative in your locality.
- Ensure that people can bring their gifts and ideas so that people can be participants in building community and meeting needs. Consider registering as a '[Place of Welcome](https://www.placesofwelcome.org.uk/)' as well (<https://www.placesofwelcome.org.uk/>) to connect and mutually share experiences with other people who are in the network up and down the country.
- Use flyers to tell people what else is on offer at your church. Additionally, let them know verbally that they are very welcome to join you *anytime they want*. That way they feel at the same time welcome and not under pressure.
- Signpost people to external organisations for additional help, when and as needed. To facilitate that, Together Southwark, a charity of the Diocese of Southwark, produced a resource titled Signposting People in Your Parish, which you can download by visiting <https://bit.ly/togethersouthwark>. The printed version was posted to churches(Incumbents) between January and February 2023.
- Join a national movement: register your organisation as a Warm Welcome space at www.warmwelcome.org.uk and receive support and information about opening as a warm space this winter.
- Let your archdeacon, Area Dean know about it. Also let togethersouthwark@southwark.anglican.org know what you have started or are planning to start and how you would like Together Southwark to assist in your work. That way, we map the initiatives and share best practice as we learn together.
- Tell us of any case studies or examples where groups/ churches have launched such schemes.

Funding

Funders have acknowledged the additional pressure brought by the Cost-of-Living Crisis on the already overstretched resources at grassroots level. They have tailored some of their grants accordingly. Below is a list of funders who can support this work.

FUND	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION	DEADLINE	GRANT AMOUNTS	HOW TO APPLY
Local authorities(LAs)	Usually, the department related to community development. It is useful to let them know your plans and enquire about funding.	Varies		Please telephone to find out who the key contact persons are, and then email them. Several churches received grants from their local authority in the Winter 2022/2023.
ASDA Foundation Cost of Living Grant	For local groups aimed at supporting increasing running costs that group will face between September 2022 and February 2023.”	03/11/2023	Up to 2k	https://www.asdafoundation.org/foundation-grants (ASDA Foundation - Grants) The application window is 28th August - 3rd November 2023, but could close early if the budget cap is reached.
Henry Smith Charity - Strengthening Communities Programme	The programme focuses on supporting the running costs of grassroots organisations, to ensure that funding reaches the most disadvantaged areas, targeting places that are economically marginalised and affected by poverty.	None	£20,000-£60,000 per year for up to three years	https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/explore-our-grants-and-apply/strengthening-communities-grants/strengthening-communities-overview/
Benefact Trust - General Grants Programme (Formerly All Churches Trust)	Supports the repair, restoration, protection and improvement of churches for wider community use.	Applications can be submitted at any time		https://benefacttrust.co.uk/which-grant-is-for-me/general-grants

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