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LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HEALTH

Evaluation of the Calderdale Warm Spaces Provision 2022/23

Executive Summary

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Centre for Health Promotion Research

May 2024

Calderdale Council

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR CALDERDALE
Creating Strong Communities through Local Giving

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Background

The cost-of-living crisis has led to many people across the UK struggling to pay for essentials such as heating or eating. For those who were already living in poverty, increasing costs have brought additional challenges. Calderdale Council recognised the added challenges local people are facing and implemented a number of initiatives to support them. One initiative funded Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to provide Warm Spaces. Warm Spaces, or warm hubs, are safe and friendly places where someone can go to keep warm during the day, throughout the winter months.

Before funded Warm Spaces were introduced in Calderdale, there was not much information available to find out whether they were an effective way to support people during the winter months. The aim of this work was to evaluate the Warm Spaces in Calderdale and find out:

- What worked well (or could be better)
- Who used the Warm Spaces
- What kinds of activities took place in the Spaces
- The impact of attending a Warm Space on a person's health and wellbeing

Methods

The evaluation was carried out by Leeds Beckett University (LBU). People across Calderdale were invited to fill out a survey or attend a focus group to share their experiences of attending a Warm Space, or the reasons why they did not go to a Warm Space in winter 22/23. Calderdale Council and Warm Spaces staff members were interviewed to share their thoughts on the types of activities in the Warm Spaces and what worked well (or could work better) in the Spaces. LBU also looked at the data collected by Calderdale Council on the Warm Spaces to find out how many people attended each space, what the spaces offered, and where they were located.

Key findings

- In winter 22/23, there were 57 Warm Spaces across Calderdale (see map at the end of this document). Of the 57 venues, 21% (n = 12) were libraries and 39% (n = 22) received money from the Cost-of-Living (CoL) fund with specific funding for Warm Spaces.
- In total, £74,577.63 from the Cost-of-Living fund was used to fund Warm Spaces in Calderdale (£65,554.53 provided from Calderdale Council and £9,023.10 from West Yorkshire Combined Authority [WYCA]).
- At least 9,344 beneficiaries attended a Warm Space funded by Calderdale Council (according to reports from 17 of the 22 funded Spaces. The figure for all 22 Spaces will be higher).
- The majority of the Warm Spaces were in libraries, community spaces and in religious buildings, and based in Central and East Calderdale.
- Funded Spaces were advertised on the Council's website, but almost half (47.8%) of the people who completed the survey were not aware of Spaces near their location.
- Almost all survey respondents (92.2%) believed that Warm Spaces should be located within local communities or in locations easy to access via public transport.

- Stigma was a significant barrier to attending a Warm Space. Stigma could potentially be countered by changing the name of the initiative and/or emphasising the activities/events on offer in the community hubs as a reason for being there.
- Applying the logic model, these were indications that warm spaces contributed to Calderdale Council's health and well-being goals: working aged people have good emotional health and wellbeing and fewer suicides; older people have strong social networks and live in vibrant communities.
- Most Warm spaces were open to everyone. However, the people who completed the survey thought they were mainly for people:
    - Aged over 65
    - who are homeless
    - with mental ill health
    - who live in deprived areas
- Reasons for not attending a Warm Space included not knowing what a Warm Space was or where they were; feelings of shame for needing to attend a Space; feeling unwelcome or thinking they were taking a space away from someone who needed it more; lack of transport; and worries about catching an illness.
- Calderdale Council's funding helped Warm Spaces to pay for:
    - Hot drinks and food
    - Wi-fi and access to device charging
    - Activities and resources (such as toys or books)
    - Practical support and advice (such as clothing vouchers or financial advice)
    - Warm Spaces to stay open for longer
    - Improvements to Warm Spaces (such as draught excluders)
    - Energy bills
- While Warm Spaces were set up to provide a safe space to stay warm (the impact of this was more apparent for people who were homeless or living in very poor-quality housing), people had other reasons to attend. Social connection (including attending a welcoming space with friendly people, making new friends, meeting existing friends, wanting to be around people or wanting to be part of a community), saving money and reducing energy used at home were important reasons for Warm Space attendance.
- Warm Spaces which had a high attendance had strong links with the community and had existing groups already using the Space. Offering activities and including people in planning what happened at the Space helped to increase attendance.
- Organisations faced challenges in running a Warm Space, such as: limited staffing, finding suitable buildings and locations, low attendance, and increased costs for the organisations. However, challenges were overcome by organisations working together, using social media and other networks to promote the Warm Spaces, and coordinating staff shifts and opening hours.
- Warm Spaces had a positive impact on physical and mental health. Being able to attend a warm and safe place provided physical benefits to attendees. In addition, Spaces encouraged social interaction and allowed attendees to share worries, which reduced feelings of loneliness.

Recommendations for policy and practice

- Build on existing community assets and provision that people already know and trust (e.g. extend hours, offer new activities).
- Stigma around attending a Warm Space could potentially be countered by changing the name of the initiative and/or highlighting the activities/events on offer. Have a focus beyond a place that is warm: offer activities, access to technology, learning, social groups.
- Work in partnership to reach the people that can benefit the most, who really need support – this helps to support people holistically and reduce unnecessary duplication. Peer support meetings for recipients of funding can help to build these links.
- Promote through networks and partnerships – support new Warm Spaces to publicise their offer and work with other organisations.
- Involve people in the design (and delivery) – the where, what and how. The council/VCSE organisations do not always know what people want and the community's need changes.
- Social isolation was found to be a bigger issue than cold homes and this is a need throughout the year (possibly worse in winter) – year-round provision could help to counter isolation and also build relationships so tailored support can be provided to meet needs in the winter months.
- Consistent funding supports sustainability as opposed to one-off grants, particularly for a year-round offer. Consistency is key to building a sense of community; it helps to build trust, which further aids better connection.

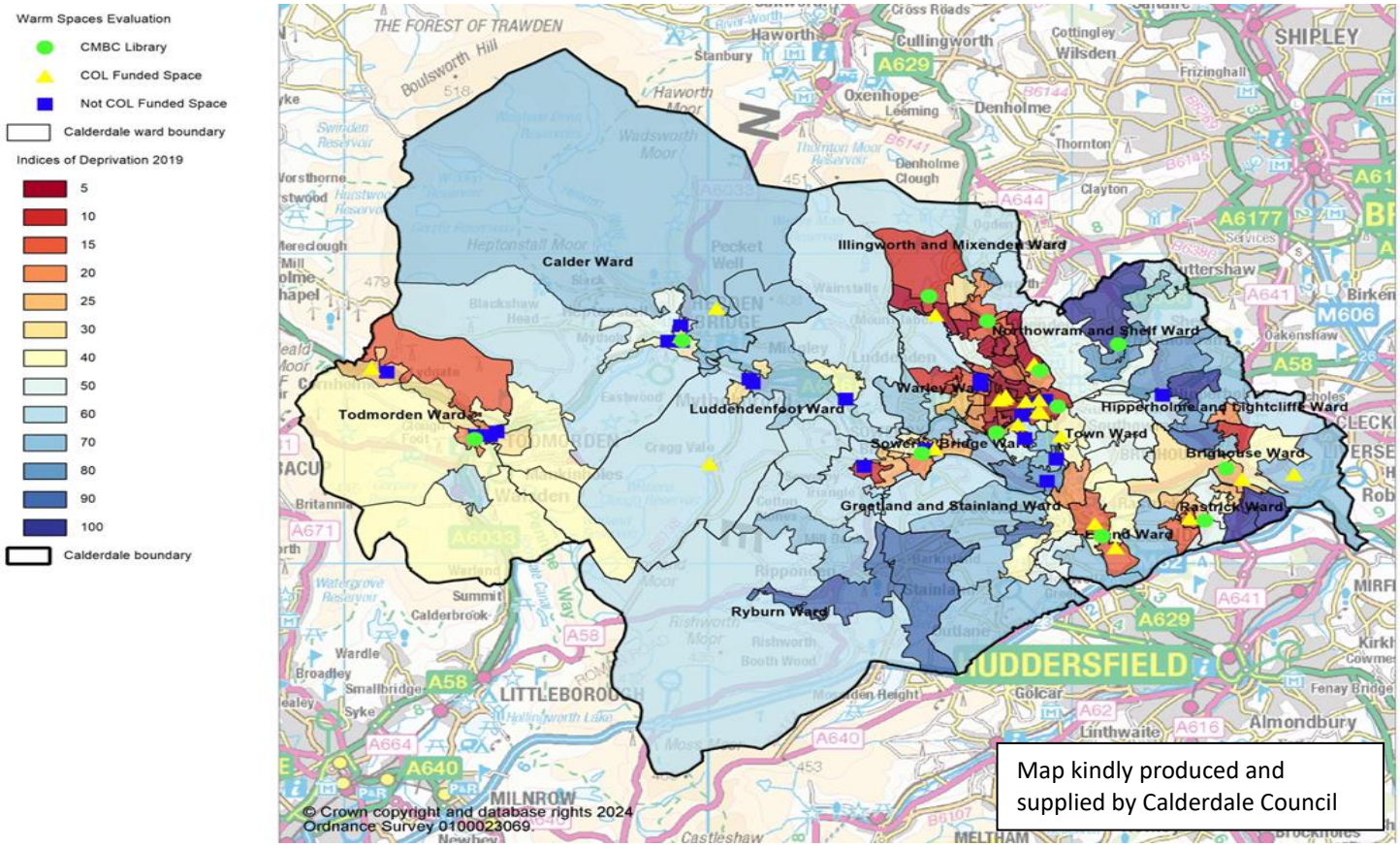

Figure 1 Map displaying Warm Spaces locations and indices of deprivation.